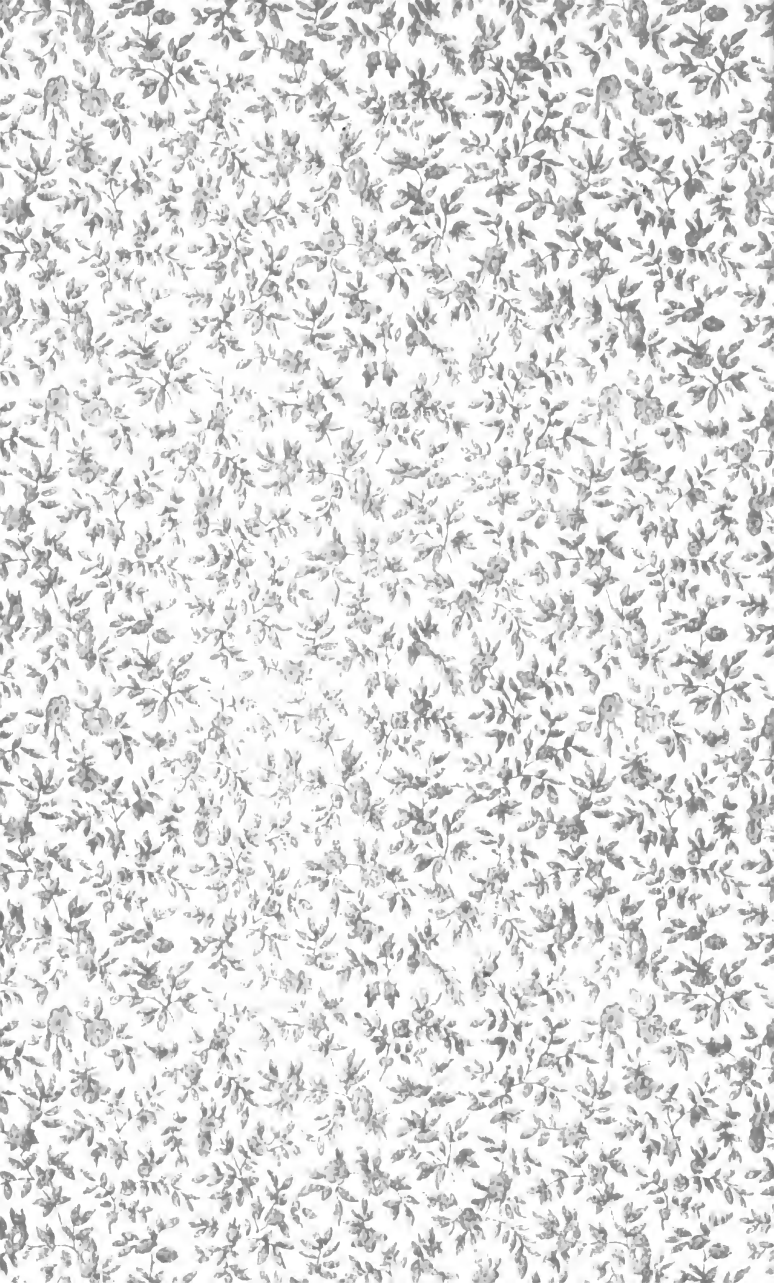


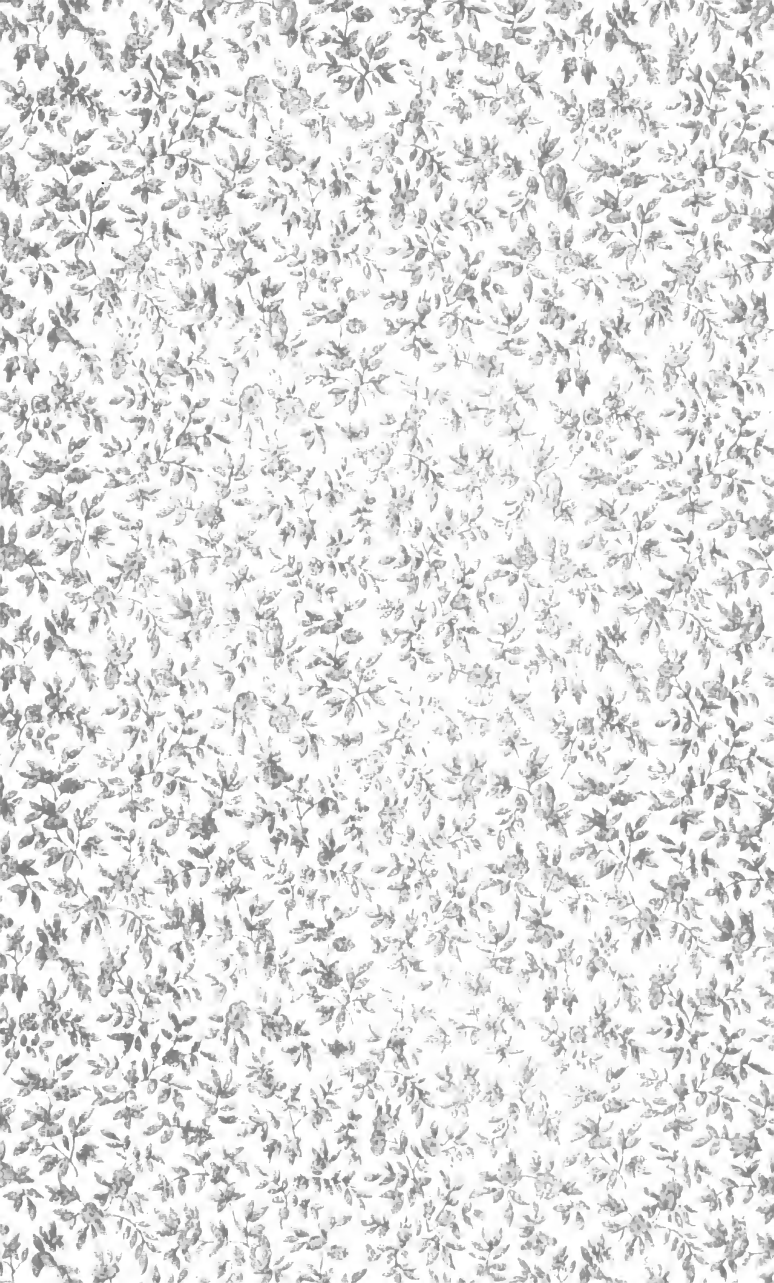
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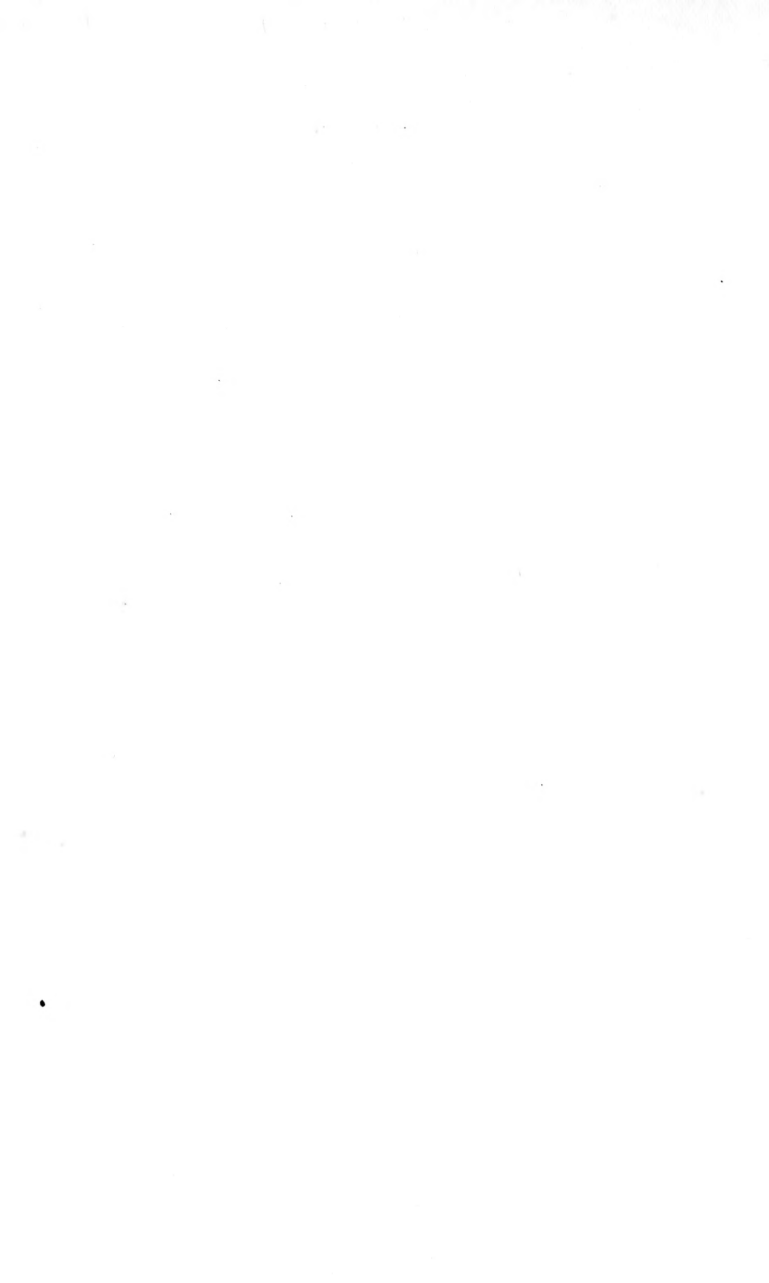


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With a blazing torch in hand Arlos advanced toward the bear.—Page 88.

LOST IN THE ROCKIES.

A STORY OF ADVENTURE IN THE
ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

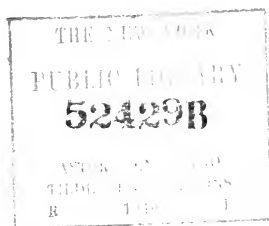
BY EDWARD S. ELLIS,

*Author of "Adrift in the Wilds," "A Young Hero," "A Jaunt
Through Java," "The Young Scout," etc., etc.*

WITH FIVE PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS BY GEORGE G. WHITE.

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LOST IN THE ROCKIES.

BY EDWARD S. ELLIS.

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LOST IN THE ROCKIES.

CHAPTER I.

WESTWARD HO!

It is not often that a vigorous young man devoted to athletic sports and pastimes, fond of fishing and hunting, and a fine horseman, injures his health on account of too close application to study ; but that is precisely what occurred in the case of Arlos Hayman when he was only eighteen years of age.

Arlos found, upon going back to his studies in the civil engineering school one autumn, that he had fallen woefully behind his class. He was so humiliated that he set his teeth with the grim resolution that he would forswear all amusement and exercise until he had fully made up his deficiencies.

And he did it. He pulled up to the head of his class, only in the hour of triumph to collapse utterly. Had he not been accustomed to active, outdoor life, this might not have happened.

His condition was alarming. Heroic measures were all that could save him.

H W L

His father called upon Dr. Kleinman, the family physician.

The doctor listened with the interest he always showed in his patients. He and the banker, Mr. Hayman, had been intimate friends for years, and the doctor was specially fond of young Hayman, who was named for him. He asked several incisive questions and then gave his decision.

"There's but one thing to be done. From what you have told me he is in a bad way. Accustomed from boyhood to fresh air and rugged exercise, he has almost committed suicide by his cessation of everything of that nature. He has taken all the strength from his body and thrown the terrific strain upon his brain. It can't stand it. He must cease to use his brain, and rebuild his constitution."

"But, doctor," said the elder Hayman, "Arlos feels a repugnance to physical exertion that amounts to disgust. I cannot persuade him to take his gun in hand, or to indulge in any of the sports of which he used to be so fond."

"That is natural, and only emphasizes what I have said about the urgent need of the change recommended."

"How would a trip to Europe do?"

"Ordinarily it would be a capital tonic, but it

won't serve in his case. At the end of a week he will be on the other side of the Atlantic. What inducement would he find there for exercise, the one thing which he needs? He would be in danger of falling into dissipation and wouldn't live a week. No; a trip to Europe will not answer."

"Then you recommend a long sea voyage?"

"In many cases that would be just the thing, but it will not do for Arlos. The routine life on board a sailing ship would become unbearable. The sea air is beneficial and for a time he would improve, but he can't attempt to play sailor. He is too weak to begin. At the end of a month he would probably be as bad if not worse than when he left home. It will not answer."

"Doctor, you hold out no hope," said his caller despairingly.

"You mistake me; Arlos can be made himself in the course of a few months. The path to perfect health is plainly marked before him."

"Will you point it out?"

"Your boy is fond of hunting. Send him to the far West; to the Sierras or the Rocky Mountains, to spend several months. He will find royal game, he will live out of doors, he will be away from books, he will breathe ozone, he will have a touch of dangerous adventure that will put him on his

mettle, he will form a love for the stir and excitement of such a life, and when he comes back to you he will be—well, just what he ought to be, a strong, sturdy, manly young fellow.”

“I see the wisdom of your counsel, doctor, but I fear Arlos cannot be persuaded to adopt the treatment; the medicine is too distasteful. His antipathy to all manner of physical exertion is too deep-seated to be overcome.”

“There can be no trouble about arranging that,” remarked Dr. Kleinman in so cheery a voice that his caller insensibly imbibed the hopeful feeling. “I have had just as bad cases. It is now about the close of my office hours, and I will go around to your home with you. I wish to have an interview with this young gentleman.”

Arlos Hayman was reclining on the lounge in the sitting-room, his mother and sister Miriam his only companions. He was pale, thin, weak, with lack-luster eyes. His courteous nature and breeding caused him to rise and extend his hand in friendly greeting to his friend, who saw that the slight effort was exhausting

When the way had been fairly paved the doctor told Arlos that he had arranged an excursion for him. Noticing the disappointed expression that immediately came over the wan countenance, the physician

added with an air and voice of heartiness that could not offend the most whimsical patient :

"It doesn't make a whit of difference to me whether you like it or not ; that doesn't enter into the question. You've got to do as I say ; do you hear that, young man ?"

"I learned long ago, doctor, that there's little use of disputing you."

"Very well, sir ; don't forget that fact. Mrs. Hayman, how long will it take you to pack up this boy's traps, so as to bundle him off for several months' absence ?"

"Why," replied the surprised mother, "I presume we could do it to-morrow."

"Very well, do it. Perhaps it's rather too late to begin to-night, but to-morrow complete the job. Miriam can give some help, I suppose, by taking a seat in a convenient chair and making criticisms. As for Arlos, make him work. Don't let him deceive you ; he has an excellent Winchester ; let him see that that is in shape."

"But for what purpose ?" asked Arlos, interested, but a little startled.

"To-morrow night you will take the train for San Francisco, but you're not going there."

"Then why board that train ?"

"Don't be impertinent, young man," replied the

doctor, with an assumption of severity which deceived no one. "You will leave the train at some point this side of the Rocky mountains. Denver will be a good station, for it is not far from that range. Leaving the railway at that point, push to the north or northwest, and never stop until you are in the heart of the wildest regions on this continent."

"And what then?" asked Arlos, amused in spite of himself.

"Go to shooting grizzly bears, antelope, deer and wolves, scalping an Indian now and then to give variety to the thing; take a look round for any gold or silver mines that may have been lost; don't be too rough with the 'bad men' that you may run against; sleep outdoors, climb mountains, plow through snowdrifts, swim mountain torrents, and—well, lots of other things that will occur to you."

The face of the doctor was so serious that every one laughed. He turned toward Arlos and said severely :

"Well, sir, what have you to say?"

"I don't see that it will do any good for me to say anything. My wishes have not been consulted in the matter," replied Arlos.

"Of course not, for you have no business to have any wishes. It's a piece of impudence on your part

to presume anything of the kind. You have twenty-four hours to make your preparations. I shall come round to-morrow evening, and if I find you here—well, sir, you will regret it.”

Arlos Hayman looked appealingly at his father and mother. If they had given him so much as a glance of encouragement he would have rebelled.

The youth uttered a dismal, half-comical sigh.

“I’ll do it if it kills me.”

“If it kills you?” repeated the doctor. “It will save you! It will bring you back at the end of a year a strong, healthy, rugged youth; though, if I may add a recommendation, it is that after you have slain all the grizzly bears, wolves, and hostile red men this side of the Sierras, you continue your journey to San Francisco, and there embark for India or Australia, and make a circuit of the world. In that case, I should feel sure that in picking up your health again you will also imbibe some common sense and won’t make such a fool of yourself as you have during the past year.”

The physician rose to depart. Stepping across the room to the lounge, he took the flaccid hand of the former athlete within his own.

“My dear boy, I have not the slightest doubt that you will make this journey to the West precisely as I have outlined it.”

“Why are you so confident, doctor?” asked Arlos, who was on his feet, with a greater display of energy than he had yet shown.

“Because you have given me your promise. You are my namesake. You scorn a lie as much as I do. You will keep your pledge, though it kills you, which it won’t do.”

The doctor was tactful in uttering these words. He feared that his young friend, when he came to think more deliberately over what was certainly a serious undertaking, would be frightened, and seek to draw back. He therefore put the boy upon his honor, knowing how exalted his moral sense was.

An encouraging feature of the situation was the interest which Arlos showed in the discussion of the theme after the departure of the physician. He sat erect and laughed when his sister Miriam recalled several of the mirthful stories told by the physician, and began to speculate over the expedition upon which he had resolved to embark.

He admitted that only a brief while before he had been urged by his old friend, Dolph Bushkirk, who had lived a number of years in Denver, to spend several weeks with him on a hunt among the mountains. The excursion was wonderfully enchanting to Arlos, and it was only his desire to

complete his studies that prevented his accepting the invitation.

He would have preferred to write to his friend and learn whether he could join him in the jaunt, but that would involve a delay of more than a week at the least, and Dr. Kleinman would not listen to it.

"I will telegraph to Dolph to-morrow," said Arlos, "and let him know when to look for me. If anything prevents his joining me I shall have to pick up some one else."

"Of course," remarked his mother, trying to conceal her solicitude, "you will not venture into those frightful solitudes alone."

The son laughed.

"The solitudes are by no means so frightful as they seem to you, mother. The Union Pacific Railway has been completed for several years. The country is settling fast, and we shall have to go a long way from Denver to reach the wild country that the doctor insists shall be my home for an indefinite time to come."

"But what about the Indians?" asked the alarmed Miriam.

The ring of laughter with which Arlos greeted this question filled the hearts of his parents with joy.

"Some years ago—and not so very many either—

there might have been good cause for your question, but the red men don't enter into any account now. They are all at peace with the United States."

"Still there are bad characters among them," the father thought it wise to remark.

"So there are hundreds and thousands of bad characters right here in the city of New York. I would rather meet the worst Indians in the most remote regions of the Northwest than many white persons that can be found within a block of where we are sitting this minute."

As Dr. Kleinman had promised, he called at the home of the Haymans the following evening to inquire about Arlos. He was told that he was already several hundred miles on the road to the Pacific slope.

CHAPTER II.

AT THE MINERS' DELIGHT.

ARLOS HAYMAN was surprised and delighted by a discovery which grew upon him, after he had bidden his parents and sister good-by and started for the great West. His interest in the expedition continually increased, and he found himself looking forward to the few weeks or months he expected to spend in the mountains with the keenest anticipation of enjoyment.

He was still weak and easily fatigued, but felt decidedly better by the time he reached Chicago, and leaving the train, enjoyed a few hours' ramble about the Lake City, which he had never before visited.

But he was eager to be on his way and was soon hurrying westward again.

At Denver his first disappointment met him. As joyous and hopeful as a child, he did not wait till the train had stopped, but leaped out upon the platform and looked expectantly around for his old friend, Dolph Bushkirk.

"Hello, Arlos, I hardly knew you!"

Young Hayman turned to greet not a youth like himself, but a bearded man, whom he recognized as Mr. Bushkirk, the father of Adolphus. The gentleman shook him warmly by the hand and showed by his looks that he was startled at the greatly altered appearance of his young friend.

"Where is Dolph?" asked Arlos. "There's nothing wrong with him, I hope."

"Nothing at all, I am glad to say, but it was most unfortunate that your telegram was delayed. My carriage is waiting and we will talk as we ride homeward.

"I believe Dolph wrote to you a couple of months ago, proposing that you should join him on a hunting excursion?" added Mr. Bushkirk, after entering the vehicle.

"Yes; I was tempted to join him, but I had fallen behind in my studies and was determined to catch up if it cost my life, and it came near doing so," explained Arlos. "But where is Dolph?"

"Away. I received your telegram and opened it. I did not reply because I feared it might prevent your coming. I do not expect Dolph back for a number of weeks; perhaps not for months."

"Where is he?"

"He started last week for a hunt in the moun-

tains. Almost his last words expressed his regret that you could not go with him."

"Too bad!" commented the disappointed Arlos; "by that I mean it is too bad for me, for it is my loss as it is my fault. He urged me to go with him, but I declined so decisively that he did not repeat the invitation."

"Yes, Dolph and a friend named Varnum Brown, a veteran hunter; took the stage to Central City. There they will procure horses and push on toward the headwaters of the Grand River, which is one of the wildest regions in the Rocky Mountains. I have heard such stories of the canyon of the Grand River that I was tempted to go with them, though they are not likely to see that wonderful place. The sources of Green River and the Platte are not very far to the north, and one is sure to meet the most royal game on the American continent."

"I wonder whether there is any hope of my overtaking Dolph and his friend?"

"Since they have had a week's start it is hardly possible, unless some accident has befallen them. They are in no hurry and yet have no cause to lag; but inasmuch as you are both aiming for the same region, it seems to me you have reason for looking for a meeting with Dolph, before either of you returns."

"It is a big hunting territory."

"So it is, covering thousands of square miles. There are other white men and a few Indians in the mountains, and you may never get within sight of where Brown and Dolph are trying to thin out the game. Of course you will not go alone?"

"I would not think of it; I will need a mountaineer of experience, who is acquainted with the country, the game and the inhabitants; but where shall I find a guide of that kind?"

Mr. Bushkirk had a large family, consisting of four girls and three boys, all of whom with the exception of the eldest, were at home. They had been friends and neighbors of the Haymans before moving West, so that Arlos was among old acquaintances.

That evening the plans of the visitor were discussed, and a line of action agreed upon. The youth was to make his way on the morrow with his gun and baggage to Central City. There he would wait until he could find a trustworthy guide whom he could engage to accompany him into the mountains.

They would try to hunt up Dolph Bushkirk and his companion, but would not neglect the real errand—the pursuit of health and recreation—which took Arlos thither.

The first part of this scheme was carried out to the letter. The time of which I am writing was not long after the completion of the railway across the continent, when hundreds of the thriving towns and cities of the West were not dreamed of, and many vast, dismal solitudes were yet unbroken by the feet of the pioneer.

It was late in the afternoon of a bright, invigorating spring day that Arlos Hayman, who was the only passenger in the ramshackle coach, descended in front of the Miners' Delight, with the intention of staying perhaps for two or three days.

In the long, rough ride thither, he shared the front seat with Val Perkins, the driver, from whom he gathered much interesting information. He learned that Dolph Bushkirk and Varnum Brown had ridden with him just six days previous over the same route. They had stayed at the Miners' Delight one night and part of the next day, when, having brought a couple of tough little ponies, they set out for the mountains to the northwest.

The driver did not know their precise destination, but thought Belix Jenkins, the landlord, might be able to give his passenger a pointer or two.

Among other things Arlos learned a great deal concerning Central City itself, so that he showed

no disappointment or surprise when he found that the "city" consisted of barely a score of rude shanties, among which the Miners' Delight was the one and only inn where travelers could obtain the rudest kind of accommodations. The lower floor consisted of two rooms, of which the largest contained the bar, where most of the city assembled each evening to smoke, drink, gamble, talk, and occasionally to exchange revolver shots.

Belix Jenkins, the landlord, was a burly Missourian, six feet three in his stockings, with the strength of an ox, and the courage of a lion. He lived in the rear lower room, while two small apartments upstairs, reached by the help of a sloping ladder, were reserved for the guests who at rare intervals came that way.

The quarters were anything but inviting to Arlos, but he had good sense and tact, and could accommodate himself to circumstances. He was prepared to make the best of everything and offend no one, unless such a person was bent on having trouble.

Inasmuch as no person would undertake to carry a large trunk around with him while hunting in the mountains, Arlos meant to leave his at the Miners' Delight, against his return. Such articles as were indispensable could be carried on the back of the horse he intended to buy.

He was satisfied from the careful inquiries he made that Belix Jenkins, though rough, combative, and poorly educated, was, like many of his class, honest and trustworthy. The stage driver, in the course of the conversation, incidentally told how two tourists, on their way to the mountains, left five thousand dollars in money, beside a quantity of valuable jewelry, with the proprietor of the Miners' Delight. They never returned, and some months after their departure it was learned that both had been killed by Indians.

They had not left instructions with Jenkins as to what he should do with their property in the event of their death, and he had no means of learning who their friends were. He was advised to appropriate to his own use the windfall which had thus come to him.

He refused to entertain the thought. He made a journey to Denver, and deposited the money and jewelry in the bank, where he swore it should remain until the crack of doom unless the legal heirs came forward and proved their claims.

That night, after finishing his supper of excellent game, Arlos told the land lord that he had a thousand dollars which he desired to leave with him.

"I don't see what use I can make of money in the mountains," explained the youth, "and I shall

be likely to lose it. I wish to hire a guide to go with me, to buy a couple of ponies, and then, reserving a little money for possible contingencies, I wish to place the rest with my trunk and extra baggage in your charge."

"I'll take it on one condition," replied the landlord, who, having no family of his own, was seated at the table with his solitary guest.

"What's that?"

"That you don't try any such low-down trick as them two Englishmen that was here summer before last played on me."

"What did they do?"

"Went off and got skulped by Injins; didn't leave me any directions as to what I should do, and consequently caused me a thunderin' lot of trouble."

"I shall certainly do my best to keep out of such a hole; but if anything should happen to me, you'll find full directions inside of my trunk, which you can open with this key."

"All right," replied the landlord, shoving the implement into his pocket; "it's a go."

"Now," went on Arlos, "what about the horses?"

"I will see that you get what you want. Some of the boys may try to work off their old plugs on you, but leave the matter with me."

"I will be glad to do so. More important than the animals is the hiring of the right sort of guide."

Belix Jenkins had left the bar in charge of his assistant, so he was in no hurry to return. He lit his pipe, and looked thoughtfully at the ceiling, made of rough planking.

"There's only one man in Central City that I could recommend, and I ain't sure that I can recommend him, or that if I done so, you could get him."

"Tell me about him."

"The chap I have in mind is Budd Slogan. There ain't a better hunter and mountaineer between the Missouri and Rio Grande. He traveled for years with Kit Carson, and was his equal all the way through. He sarved a couple of years in the Confederate army, and is in the prime of life."

"What is the objection to him?"

"Wal, in the fust place, Budd has got it into his head that there's bushels of gold in the mountain side—which the same may be the fact—and he wants to put in his time hunting for that. Howsumever, I guess you can get him to postpone that bus'ness for awhile, if you pay him purty well."

"How much ought I to offer him for his services as guide and hunter?"

"How long do you expect to be in the mountains?"

"I cannot say positively, but I should guess about a month or six weeks."

"A hundred dollars a month is good pay."

"I will be glad to do better than that."

"Would you be willing to give him, say, one hundred and fifty a month?"

"Quite. Suppose I offer him four hundred dollars for the job, with the understanding that it shan't last longer than two months, or, if it does, I shall pay him at the same rate?"

"That'll fix him dead to rights. The chance is too good for him to throw away."

"And I'll give him half of it in advance; and——"

"No, you won't. You won't give him a cent until he gets back," interrupted the landlord decisively. "Any other plan will bust the deal."

"How, then, shall it be arranged?"

"You will give the terms in my presence. He'll agree to 'em, powerful sudden. I'll tell him you've put the money in my hands, and when he comes back with you I'll see that the agreement is kept."

"It secures me against loss, and if, as you feel certain, he will accept the conditions, nothing could

suit me better. You intimated, however, that you did not recommend him unreservedly."

"The trouble with Budd is that he has the confoundest thirst on him of any chap this side of the Mississippi. If you paid him two hundred dollars you couldn't pry him away from Central City with a forty-foot cowbar until he had drunk every cent of it, and then he wouldn't be fit for anything inside of a week. When Budd is drunk he's as ugly as a grizzly b'ar with the measles, but when he's sober he's one of the best fellers that ever lived."

"But he will be unable to procure any liquor after leaving this place."

"That's true, onless he takes it with him, and he can't carry 'nough to hurt him. The trouble is, howsumever, that Budd has got plenty of funds now. He rode into Central City three days ago, and has been guzzling ever since. He's got one of the best animals in the place, so if you hire him you'll have to buy only one pony and trappings for yourself. I'll fix it about his drinking," added the landlord, with the manner of one who has reached the solution of a puzzling problem.

"How?"

"The Miners' Delight is the only place within fifty miles where he can get a drop. I'll shet down

on him. It will make him mad, but I don't care for that, provided he doesn't mount his pony and start for Glencoe, Sunset, Boulder, or some other place, where he can drink as long as his money holds out."

"Where shall I see Slogan?"

"He will be here to-night. You had better leave the matter with me, for if he kicks purty hard it won't do for you to talk to him. He might not treat you white; I'll handle him the best I know how."

"I am sure of that; you place me under great obligations and I shall be happy——"

"That'll do on that p'int; we'll adjourn to the barroom now, as it's time to light the lamps. Pete will 'tend to these things."

Pete was the young man, not specially bright-witted, who acted as barkeeper when Landlord Jenkins was called away, and who did the cooking and such chores as were necessary about the Miners' Delight.

As the landlord and his guest entered the large room of the hotel, the former spoke to Pete, who nodded and passed back into the living-room, which served all other purposes except the lodgment of the guests.

Three of the citizens of Central City were stand-

ing at the bar, glasses in hand. They looked at Arlos curiously, and one of them invited him to drink. The youth thanked him and said he never partook of liquor.

The man instantly flared up.

“When I axes a stranger to drink with me, and he insults me by slingin’ back the words in my teeth, he’s got to apolergize, or fight, or——”

The iron grip of Landlord Jenkins was on the speaker’s neck, with the other hand upon his trousers. The astonished miner dropped his glass with a crash and tried to stay his progress toward the outer air. But he was a child in the hands of a giant.

The next moment he was flung headlong out of the door, and the proprietor of the Miners’ Delight walked calmly back behind his bar with the remark:

“This young feller’s my friend, and he doesn’t drink with nobody ’cepting myself; you hear what I say, pards.”

They heard him, and hearing, heeded his words.

CHAPTER III.

ARLOS AND HIS GUIDE.

ARLOS took the most modest place he could find in the Miners' Delight. The seats consisted mainly of stools, empty boxes, and one or two strong chairs. It was an interesting study for him to watch these men, of whom eight or nine appeared before the evening was well advanced.

They were not all miners, but they formed a coarse, rough, heavily-bearded set, with their trousers tucked in their boots, slouch hats on their heads, and most of them without coat or vest, in place of which was a red or blue flannel shirt. The belt around the waist was full of cartridges, while the revolver at the hip was always ready for instant service, and those fellows knew how to use it.

Despite his retired position Arlos naturally attracted notice, and several invitations to drink followed. He invariably declined, saying that Landlord Jenkins had arranged that he should do all his drinking with him. The point was generally caught at once and no unpleasant attention followed.

The youth entered into conversation with a number, with whom he soon established pleasant relations. But he was on the lookout for Budd Slogan, who from some unexpected cause was a long time in showing up.

It was past nine o'clock when a short, heavy-set, powerful-looking man, attired much the same as the others, roughly pushed open the door, and striding up to the bar struck his fist upon it, turned round so as to face the rest, and said in a ringing voice :

"Come, pards, nominate your p'ison."

Promptly all went forward excepting Arlos Hayman, a slight which the newcomer was quick to notice.

"What's the matter with you, stranger?" he demanded, with a threatening look.

"Nothing; I never drink."

Arlos had caught a nod from the landlord when this individual entered, which told him that he was Budd Slogan. He decided to be frank with him, a thing he could well afford to do, when he knew Jenkins would back him up in it.

Budd seemed taken back by the promptness with which he was answered.

"Stranger, you're nothin' more'n a boy; if you was a man and insulted me like that, you'd never

get a chance to insult any one else. I must insist, howsumever, that you take a drink with me."

Arlos saw that the landlord was watching events closely and he felt no fear. He arose smilingly and walked forward to the bar, Budd Slogan keeping his eye on him with curious interest.

"Hanged if you ain't the finest-looking younker I've seen in a good while, only your face is as pale as a girl's and you don't look stronger than a kitten."

"And I am not much stronger," said Arlos.

"What's the matter, younker?"

"I have been very sick. I have come out here for my health; it will take me a good while to get well. I have never drunk liquor and it would injure me to do so; besides, I have given my father and mother my promise never to drink. I am sure, therefore, that you will excuse me for not joining you."

The incident had taken a fortunate turn for Arlos Hayman. No words or line of conduct could have been wiser. He had won the sympathy of the rough hunter, who said, with a show of feeling which surprised his companions:

"That explanation shows you're a gentleman, stranger, even if you are only a younker, and when a man speaks about his father and mother like that

he hits me hard. I once had a mother, but she is dead long ago, and it was lucky for her, 'cause it was afore she had time to know what a worthless scamp of a son she had. What's your name?"

"Arlos Hayman."

"Whar from?"

"The city of New York."

"Purty fair-sized town, ain't it?"

"Yes, the largest in this country; contains a million people, and buildings fourteen stories high——"

"Thar! that'll do," interrupted Budd Slogan, holding his glass suspended in hand, the others doing the same and listening amusedly to the conversation. "I've heerd something like that afore and warned the chap down in Deadwood that if he slung that statement at me agin about the aforesaid houses with ten or twelve or fourteen stories, it meant fight, and I had the drop on him. What you had said previous sorter drawed me toward you, but don't sp'ile the bus'ness by any such yarns. I'll forgive you if you don't say it agin."

Arlos laughed and said:

"Very well. We'll drop it, Budd."

"How the mischief did you know my name?"

"I am going on a hunt up the mountains. I am looking for the best hunter and guide in the coun-

try, and am willing to pay him a good price for his services. When I made inquiry for my man I was told there was only one such individual, and his name was Budd Slogan. I received so good a description of you that I knew you the moment you entered the room."

"Good!" exclaimed one of the party with a laugh, in which the others joined. "It's on you, Budd."

The hunter could not help being pleased at the neat manner in which he had been complimented. Arlos thereby strengthened the good impression already made.

The man looked quizzically at the youth for a moment, then drank the liquor in his glass, the rest joining him, after which he solemnly extended his hand.

"Yunker, put it thar. You'll do."

"You're right," added Landlord Jenkins. "He's true blue, and, Budd, if you aren't the biggest fool this side of the Pacific, you'll shet down on guzzling and make your bargain with that young man. He's offering you a chance which you don't get every day."

The hunter was impressed. He stood a moment as if debating whether to continue his drinking or to stop. Belix Jenkins was resolved that he should



Arlos and the hunter sat down by the table, on which a lamp was burning.
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not indulge to any extent, but it would be much preferable to have him refrain of his own free will.

"There's a lamp burning in t'other room," he said. "Go in there, Budd, with him, and talk over this bus'ness."

"Come on," added Arlos, stepping briskly into the adjoining apartment. "It won't take us long to reach a decision."

The hunter followed, and, closing the door between the two rooms, they sat down by the table, on which a lamp was burning.

A few minutes later Arlos partly opened the door and beckoned to the landlord, who stepped forward.

"Can you give us a minute or two?"

"Of course," he replied, leaving the bar to his factotum, Pete.

"Well, it's all settled, Mr. Jenkins. Budd agrees to go with me on the terms I named to you."

"What mought they be?"

"Four hundred dollars for the trip, if it does not exceed two months, and at the same rate for all time beyond that."

"Whew! but that's a big price. Budd may claim that he's got more, but I wouldn't believe it if he swore to it."

"I hain't made any such claim," grinned Budd.

"But don't you think I orter have a part of my wages in advance?"

"What fur?" demanded the landlord savagely.

"Wal, it seems more business-like, that's all."

"You haven't any family. You don't want any money in the mountains, and if you had it you would drink it all up. No, sir. Budd, this young gentleman has placed the funds in my hands, and when you bring him back you shall have every cent he has promised, but you don't get a smell of the money afore. You hear me?"

"Bein' as you're talking loud enough to be heard halfway to the Big Horn range, I may say conferdently I do hear you, Belix; and bein' also and likewise that I ain't got any put in this matter, why, I accept the terms, and am ready to start just as soon as the younker says the word."

The best feature of the arrangement—one indeed that was better than Landlord Jenkins expected—was Budd Slogan's abstention from drinking. He spent half an hour more with Arlos, going over the details of their plans, and when he was through strode out of the barroom without stopping at the bar.

He had given his promise both to the youth and the landlord that he would not touch a drop of liquor, except that which was contained in the

small flask Mr. Jenkins promised to present to him before starting.

So excellently was everything arranged that on the following morning, before the forenoon was half gone, Arlos Hayman and Budd Slogan rode away from Central City, fully prepared for their hunting excursion in the neighborhood of the wild forests of the Rocky Mountains, known as Middle Park.

Arlos was furnished with a fine, tough little pony, who mated well with the animal ridden by his companion. Arlos was told that the name of the animal was "Jack," while Budd addressed his as "Rio Grande."

"Which the same is on account that he hain't never been within a thousand miles of that muddy stream of water which half the time don't deserve the name of river," he explained.

They took with them as scant a supply of luggage as was possible. Each had a strong, heavy blanket strapped behind his saddle and a few smaller articles. The larger weapon in both cases was a fine Winchester, accompanied by an excellent revolver, hunting-knife, and a plentiful supply of cartridges.

"Thar's one thing I'd like to leave behind," remarked Budd, "'cause bringing it along don't give me any solid comfort."

"What may that be?"

“My thirst. I must have been born with a thirst, for I can’t remember when I hain’t had it.”

“I think it will leave you before long.”

“P’rhaps; but Belix give me a flask of his stuff. Bein’ as I can’t have no peace as long as that stuff is wabbling ’round the outside of me, why, I’ll shift it to the interior of the aforesaid Budd Slogan, and then, by gracious! I can’t help myself.”

Arlos could not object, though he would have been glad had his friend not brought the flask with him.

The guide drew it from the pocket of his coat (for, like Arlos, he had donned one of those garments), twisted out the cork, put the mouth of the flask between his lips, and threw his head back with the bottom of the vessel pointed toward the sky.

The youth watched him while the fluid gurgled down his throat.

“I wonder whether there is enough to make him ugly. He is taking a big drink, and he may become morose and savage——”

At this instant Budd snatched away the vessel from his mouth, and with an angry expletive flung it fifty feet from him. At the same time he sent much of the fluid flying from his mouth in spray and mist.

Glaring like a wild beast at the wondering Arlos, he demanded :

“Do you call Belix Jenkins a Christian?”

“I did not know that he claimed to be one.”

“He’d better not, confound him ! What do you s’pose he done?”

“I’m sure I cannot tell.”

“Why, he filled that flask with water !”

At the risk of offending his friend Arlos broke into hearty laughter, which continued until his sides ached.

Budd seriously meditated turning about and having it out with the author of the trick ; but they were already several miles on the road, and little was to be gained by going back to the Miners’ Delight. Slowly he recovered from his anger and gave his thoughts to the more serious work before them.

Ever since starting, and indeed long before, the sky to the northwest, the west, and southwest was filled by the vast mountain ranges, whose crests rose far above the snow line and presented the same spotless covering during the most sultry temperature of summer. The country over which the two horsemen approached the foothills was rough, and with so luxuriant a growth of succulent grass and vegetation that it afforded the best of grazing for their ponies.

There was an abundance of water also in the form of small streams, which, winding hither and yon, in time joined with larger ones, eventually to become some of the most important rivers, having their rise in the central portion of the continent.

Budd Slogan had visited this section before. Indeed, he had hunted in the Sweetwater range, the Laramie Mountains, Rattlesnake Hills, the Big Horn, and as far north as the wonderful Yellowstone Park. Probably no person could have given him "points" on that wild section, unless it might be some of the Indians who had spent all their lives there.

At this stage of the journey little dependence was placed upon their rifles. They might meet with game, but the chances were that they would not see any for several days. There was a variety of fish in the larger streams, but Arlos had not deemed it worth while to bring any tackle with him, and his guide scarcely gave a thought to that kind of food which he did not secure with his rifle.

Before leaving the Miners' Delight, therefore, each provided himself with a substantial lunch, which it was believed would serve them longer than they were likely to require it.

About noon a small stream was crossed where the water rose hardly to their horses' knees. Looking

down from his saddle into the cold, clear current, Arlos saw several large fish darting here and there, and half-regretted that he had not the means of making them form part of their dinner. On the further bank they removed the bits from their ponies' mouths and allowed them to pluck the rich grass, while their riders sat on the ground and ate their lunch, after which Budd Slogan filled his pipe and smoked.

The halt had lasted about an hour, when the hunter knocked the ashes from his brierwood and said:

"We may as well be movin'; the ponies are in good shape, and will have plenty of rest after we git fairly into the mountains."

"And when will that be?"

"In two or three days, if we don't have to lay by on account of a storm, and the sky looks a little like it," added Budd, shutting one eye and squinting at the heavens, which had become slightly overcast during the last hour.

"And what is to be done in the event of a storm?"

The guide looked at his companion as if unable to understand his question.

"What's to be done? Why, nothin', of course. We'll hunt cover and wait till it is over."

"That's what I mean."

"And that's what we will do if we find the shelter; but if we don't, we'll have to grin and bear it—but hold on a minute."

He had become suddenly interested in something almost due west of where they stood. Arlos saw him fix his gray, penetrating eyes on a point apparently halfway up the rocky slope. The youth looked in the same direction but discovered nothing. Then he reflected that he had his small pocket telescope with him.

Drawing this forth, he leveled it at the mountain side and groped here and there, until at last he detected what it was that had caught the eye of the guide.

From behind a mass of rocks, where there seemed to be a growth of stunted cedar, he observed a faint, bluish column of vapor creeping upward. It seemed to be the smoke from a small campfire that probably had been kindled for a long time and then left to die out of itself.

Since he could detect nothing more, he handed the glass to Budd, who was familiar with its use. The guide studied the shadowy indications for some minutes, standing rigid and in perfect silence. Then he passed the instrument back to Arlos, who asked:

"What do you make of it?"

"Nothin' more than we see. Somebody stopped there last night, but did not leave till late this morning. If that was done in Arizona or New Mexico I'd know it was a signal of some of the Apaches, and that it said something 'bout us, and we'd have to look out or our skulps wouldn't be on our heads six hours longer."

"Do you think the campfire belongs to Indians?"

"As like as not, but we've nothing to fear from 'em; it isn't a signal, and therefore doesn't signify nothin', as I remarked previous."

"I wonder," exclaimed Arlos, struck with the new idea, "whether it can be that my friend Dolph Bushkirk and his friend stopped last night there."

Budd shook his head.

"Nothin' like that; them folks have nigh onto a week's start, and wouldn't be hangin' round this part of the world. They are still ahead of us, and that's where we've got to look for 'em, instead of off yonder to one side of the road, so to speak."

CHAPTER IV.

ON GUARD.

It was early in the afternoon that Budd Slogan and Arlos Hayman remounted their ponies and resumed their journey toward the northwest, steadily approaching the heart of the stupendous mountain range, where they expected to spend an indefinite time in hunting the royal game, which in those days was more plentiful than at the present time.

Now and then the guide halted, and facing his animal the other way, held the glass leveled at the point which had attracted his interest when in camp. Gradually the dim, shadowy column of vapor melted from sight, until at last even the keen eyes of the veteran were unable to distinguish it.

He seemed to suspect that the persons who had kindled the fire might reveal themselves, but they did not, and he finally dismissed them from his thoughts.

While Arlos Hayman was anxious to meet his friend Dolph Bushkirk, he knew the chances were

against his doing so, at least for a week or two to come. As has been stated, it was possible that they might not approach within a hundred miles of each other until their return. Other men, both white and red, were in the section, and were more likely to be encountered. Budd had intimated that the room of most of these was preferable to their company, but he showed no fear of them.

Another matter gave Arlos more immediate concern—that was his own health. It may be said that he was fully roused, and more determined than ever to recover his usual rugged strength, but was too sensible to expect this to occur in a single day or in several days.

In point of fact, however, his recovery was more rapid than he anticipated. His appetite became so keen that he was astonished at the amount of food he disposed of without fully satisfying his hunger.

Arlos dreaded catching cold, but when sure he had done so, he found that the effects of his exposure were thrown off and he was in reality stronger than before. It became necessary to loosen his waistband; his garments in which, as he expressed it, he had “rattled around,” began to fit him snugly; a test of strength showed that he could lift more, leap further and higher, run faster and longer, and laugh at a degree of exertion which, only a

brief time previous, would have laid him exhausted on his back. Unquestionably the advice of Dr. Kleinman was the wisest that could have been given, and he thanked the honest physician hundreds of times for sending him to the West.

When the spring day drew to a close the horse-men had penetrated a goodly distance into the region where they expected to hunt. They were fairly among the foothills, and the air had grown cool and bracing. Grass was still abundant, and a small stream of clear, running water, and the presence of several huge bowlders made the spot an ideal one for camping.

The saddles and bridles were removed and the ponies turned loose. The guide did not consider it necessary to tether or hobble them, for he knew Rio Grande was too well trained to wander off, and Jack was not likely to do so on his own account.

Having made the halt, the next thing was to prepare camp, which term in the West is applied to any spot where one person or more spends the night in the open. Pine and cedar were growing near, and a goodly supply was soon gathered and flung in a pile at the base of one of the bowlders.

After throwing down his first bundle Budd Slogan abruptly paused and looked at the ground. Then he stooped and scrutinized it more closely.

"What do you see?" asked Arlos, who was watching him.

"Nothin' 'ticular, 'cept that some one else camped here about a week ago."

"About a week ago!" repeated the youth, hurrying to the side; "then it must have been Dolph and Varnum Brown."

"Why so?" asked Budd, straightening up and looking into the face of his excited companion.

"They are just a week ahead of us."

"Which likewise a good many others may be; p'raps Varn—who's an old friend of mine—and the younker was the ones that spent the night hereabouts, but it ain't no ways sartin, and I don't see that it makes any difference either way."

The dried twigs and branches were fixed in place with a skill acquired during years of long campaigning. Then Budd drew a match along his thigh and shaded the flame while he applied it to the fuel.

The expertness of many white and red men at this delicate work is amazing. An Apache or Comanche Indian will lean over from his galloping steed, strike a match against a stone, and swing back and light his pipe without abating the speed of his horse; a Chinaman or an old soldier will start a fire from wet twigs or tiny sticks which

would require several boxes of matches from you or me, with the probability of a failure in the end.

But Budd Slogan found no trouble in starting a strong, crackling blaze into life. He stooped over only a moment or two, when the tiny flame caught and the diminutive conflagration was under headway. Then he left it to itself and set about his other duties.

Arlos was watching the blaze, when he caught the glimmer of something white a few feet away, as revealed in the glare thrown out by the burning wood. Picking up the object he saw that it was a portion of an envelope. The lower side had been burned, but the stamp, postmark, and business address, printed in the left-hand corner, were easily read.

The postmark was "Denver, April 11," and the business address was "J. G. Bushkirk & Co.," of the same city.

The inference was clear. Adolphus Bushkirk and his guide, Varnum Brown, had spent the night on the spot. The envelope may have served the purpose of starting the fire, after which it was flung aside.

Arlos announced his discovery, showing the singed paper to his friend.

"This is the very place where they stayed!"

Budd was interested in preparing some coffee, and showed no interest in that which had roused his young friend. Without ceasing his work, or doing more than glance at the envelope, he asked in turn :

“Wal, what of it?”

“Little that I know of,” replied Arlos, “except that it is interesting. You were right in saying the ashes and embers are a week old, but how were you able to tell it, Budd?”

“By looking at ’em.”

“I presume so, but I can’t help wishing we had been a week earlier.”

“Another thing would have sarved as well.”

“What’s that?”

“If them chumps ahead had been a week later; but, bein’ as they aren’t, why let’s talk of somethin’ else.”

Among the precious supplies brought by these hunters were several pounds of ground coffee, sugar, together with salt and pepper. Each was provided with a tin cup, and what veteran of the civil war would have asked more when on the march or in camp? Milk, eggs, and the other accessories sometimes used are of no account, for experience teaches how to dispense with them.

In a few minutes the water in each cup which had been set over the fire was boiling, the brown grains

tumbling over each other, and giving off an aroma, which to hungry nostrils is more fragrant than the most ravishing perfume from the "rose valleys of Yemen." Probably Arlos Hayman was right in believing that never in all his life had he been so ravenously hungry, or his yearning for the delicious Java so irrestrainable.

"I have heard about the nectar of the gods," he sighed, setting down his cup, "but it isn't to be compared with this. Budd, how can you ever crave whisky when you can get coffee?"

"That's what I sometimes ask myself," replied the hunter, squinting into his cup to see whether any drinkable fluid remained; "but I also likewise asks myself the conundrum twisted 'round thusly: How can I ever crave coffee when I kin get 'knock 'em stiff' like that which Belix Jenkins sells at the Miners' Delight? Young man, I understood you never swallowed any whisky?"

"You understood me correctly."

"Wal, don't never do it: that's the advice of a chap as has been fool 'nough to guzzle several ship-loads of the p'ison, and he would have drunk more 'cepting for the good reason that he couldn't get it. Bein' as how you've never begun, I don't s'pose you're likely to do so, and therefore I won't temperance lecture."

"No, Budd; it is not not necessary," said Arlos kindly, as his friend, having finished his eating and drinking, proceeded to fill and light his pipe; "I don't claim to be better or wiser than hundreds of others of my age, but it has always struck me as among the most idiotic things conceivable that a person should cultivate a taste for beer and liquor, when he knows it injures him and takes away from the real enjoyment of life."

Seated thus on blankets spread upon the ground, with their backs supported by bowlders behind them, and the air just cool enough to make the slight warmth of the camp fire agreeable, Budd Slogan was in one of his most genial moods. He had formed a deep liking for his youthful companion, and when the latter asked him to relate some of his experiences, the grim veteran of so many campaigns and scenes of peril willingly complied.

He told of scout and skirmish and battle during the civil war, but that which interested Arlos most was his experiences in the Southwest, in this very region, and in equally perilous sections beyond. More than one story of thrilling encounter with the Apaches, the Comanches, the Kiowas, Nez Percés, Shoshones, and other tribes, sometimes alone and sometimes in the company of that ideal scout, Kit Carson, or other mountaineers hardly less distin-

guished, was related in the uncouth but graphic language of this man, whose life, if fully recorded, would surpass any work of fiction in vivid interest.

"Now," said Budd, when the evening was well advanced, and he had smoked his third pipe, "we've got to begin doing things in business style."

"I am ready to help so far as I can."

"We're in a country where neither must sleep unless t'other is awake. I'll be easy with you at first. What time is it?"

"It lacks a few minutes to ten," replied Arlos, looking at his watch.

"Therefore, it ain't fur till midnight; you can keep guard till then, when I'll run things the rest of the night out."

"That will hardly be fair to you, Budd, for it will make your watch three times as long as mine."

"After you've been broke in you'll have all of that you want; as it is, you'll find your hands full, for you can't walk back and forth, as a sentinel does in the army."

"Why not?"

"Wal, it might do in some cases, but if there are any redskins prowling 'round, don't you see you'll give 'em the best chance they kin ask to pick you off? We'll let the fire go down, for we don't need

it, and you'll lay off there wrapped up in your blanket, where no one can't see you until he creeps up so near that you kin get the drop on him. Do you hear me?"

"I understand."

"All right; here goes."

And with no more directions, and without so much as bidding him good-night, the hunter wrapped his blanket about his sturdy figure and lay down with his feet toward the fire, which even then had smoldered so low that nothing more than the heavy boots would have been visible to the keenest-eyed of Indians, who might be lurking in the vicinity. Before Arlos was aware, the responsibility of a sentinel was thrust upon him.

"This is new work," he reflected, "but it ought to be easy. At any rate, there will be no trouble to keep awake two hours more. I'll stretch my duties to one o'clock, so as to give Budd a long rest. It is right that we should divide the task more equally between us."

Filled with this resolve, the youth flattered himself that he set about the business after the manner and style of a veteran. The fire, as has been intimated, had sunk low. By and by utter darkness would enfold the little camp.

Arlos moved his position a little further from the

embers, so as to make sure he could not be seen by any enemy lurking near. The stories which his companion had told earlier in the evening so filled his mind that they produced their natural effect, and caused him to magnify his responsibility.

“If I should fall asleep, some treacherous Indian might steal up and slay us both—but why suppose that which is unsupposable?” he asked impatiently.

And with his back against the boulder, his blanket folded about his shoulders and body, and his Winchester resting across his knees, where it could be seized and used at the first approach of danger, the senses of the youth were never more alert. He felt as if he could not sleep for twenty-four hours, and nothing was easier than to maintain his position until the rising of the morrow's sun.

Listening intently, he failed to hear the munching of the ponies' jaws. They had finished cropping the grass, and, like Budd Slogan, were asleep, or, at any rate, soon would be. Consequently the care of them was also upon the shoulders of the young man.

The solemn, almost inaudible, roar or murmur which is an accompaniment of solitude, filled his ears. The silence was profound. Arlos felt himself alone in a world of night and shadows.

The stillness was made the more impressive by

the faint report of a gun which broke upon his ear. It seemed to have been fired miles away, and from somewhere in the depth of the mountains.

“How strange it would be,” he reflected, “if that was the rifle of Dolph Bushkirk; or,” he added, with a shudder, “it may have been fired at him——”

He ceased his gloomy speculation, for at that moment one of the ponies whinnied. To the lonely sentinel this was evidence that a new peril was at hand.

CHAPTER V.

A LUCKY SHOT.

THE mind of Arlos Hayman was filled with a score of disturbing fancies as to the nature of the danger which threatened the camp.

He knew from his own experience, before being told by Budd Slogan, that one of the keenest and most unerring of sentinels is an intelligent horse. His senses of smell and vision often enable him to detect the approach of peril when it is unsuspected by his master.

The faint whinny of one of the ponies showed that he had been disturbed, and whatever the cause, it must be of an alarming nature.

The youth held his rifle so as to be able to use it on the instant, and leaning slightly forward tried to peer into the impenetrable gloom ; but it was too profound for him to distinguish anything.

He recalled that Budd had not given him any directions as to what he should do in the event of being disturbed. It must have been that he deemed

such a thing too improbable. Had he thought otherwise he would have warned Arlos to awaken him on the instant.

Not having done so, Arlos decided not to disturb him, unless the peril should become more tangible.

The immediate question with him was whether he should steal out to where the animals had lain down and ascertain for himself the nature of the danger. This, it will be seen, was a risky thing to do; for if it should prove that an Indian, or perhaps more than one, was prowling near the camp, the young sentinel would expose himself to a shot or stealthy attack. He did not know precisely where to look for his enemy, who would be the first to detect him.

The fire had smoldered so low that it ceased to give out any illumination. Not the faintest glimpse of Budd's body could be perceived, so that Arlos, who was still further from the ashes, was certain of being out of sight of any one.

Suddenly an ember, lying across another, broke apart and a twist of flame shot upward.

It was like thrusting a lighted lamp into a darkened room. The abrupt glare lit up the surrounding gloom for a distance of several yards. Not only was the inanimate form of the guide brought into distinct relief, but the scared face of the youth

seated on the ground several paces away, reflected the glow.

Instinctively Arlos turned his eyes in the direction of the spot where he supposed the animals to be. To his amazement he saw that one of them had risen to his feet and was looking off into the gloom.

He was motionless, and Arlos discerned him very indistinctly and only for an instant, when the little flame expired and all became blank darkness again.

Prudence whispered that it was high time to awaken Budd Slogan. The situation had become so grave that he alone could deal with it, but the youth was now acting in obedience to a curious impulse.

He had been appointed sentinel, and nothing was said about his appealing to his veteran companion, no matter what the situation might become, until the turn of night.

"And I won't ask his help," muttered Arlos, compressing his lips; "we are likely to have considerable of this sort of business, and there's no better time than now to break myself in."

Gently flinging off his blanket he began creeping away from camp and toward the standing horse. While doing so he grasped his rifle in one hand.

He moved slowly and with extreme care, glancing

continually to the right and left, in front and even behind him. Every few seconds he stopped and listened. He could not hear anything, and the starlight enabled him to see but a slight distance.

The point where he had caught sight of the standing animal was so clearly remembered that he did not deviate in his course to it. When he had gone as it seemed, the full distance, he paused with a thrill of misgiving.

The pony was not visible.

"Some one has stolen him!"

But the fear had hardly shaped itself in his mind when, to his great relief, he perceived the outlines of the animal, which had lain down again. Just beyond was the second horse, though in the darkness Arlos could not identify either of them.

"They are safe for the time, but there's no saying how long they will be."

He crept still closer. The nearest pony raised his head, pricked his ears, and again whinnied, but with so slight effort that he could not have been heard more than a few rods distant.

"There must be an Indian on the other side of him," was the conclusion of Arlos; who, it need not be said, was thinking hard and fast. "I'll steal round to that point and see whether I can get a shot at him."

It was a daring proceeding, but the youth carried it out in spirit and letter.

With infinite labor and pains he moved through the grass, keeping his head and shoulders so low that at times he seemed to be gliding after the manner of a serpent, instead of upon all fours.

When directly opposite the point where he had first halted, he paused again, as alert, watchful, and attentive as ever. He had gone so far beyond the horses that he could barely make out the form nearest to him, which, it will be borne in mind, was not the one that was the means of bringing him to this spot.

It was the turn of this animal now to throw up its head, and, holding it motionless a moment, emit that signal of alarm which has often saved a man's life.

"What can it be that you have learned?"

With the question came a conviction to Arlos Hayman, which, despite his trying situation, brought a smile to his face. It must have been himself that had caused the last evidence of disturbance on the part of the ponies. His stealthy movements had attracted their notice, but evidently they speedily identified him and ceased to be frightened.

Following this conviction was another: Whatever the nature of the danger, it was gone. The

prowler must have discovered that the sentinel was alert, and that it was not safe to attempt to run off the horses. Accordingly he had withdrawn to await a more favorable opportunity.

This terrifying thought came to the youthful guard: Suppose that in his brief absence the treacherous foe had stolen up to the camp fire and slain Budd Slogan?

The awful fear caused Arlos to run across the intervening space, not pausing until he bent over the dark bundle at the foot of the bowlder and heard the deep breathing of his friend. Then he heaved a sigh of relief and thankfulness.

"It was a close call," he muttered, resuming his old place, with his back against the bowlder, and his blanket gathered about him. "What a fatal mistake any one would make to sleep without a guard! I've a strong notion to keep up the watch through the night."

Fifteen minutes later Arlos Hayman was as sound asleep as Budd Slogan!

Who can fight off the insidious approach of slumber? Though a thousand lives may be at stake, though the wearied sailor is clinging to the swaying mast, though the engineer stands with his hand upon the throttle, though the general is directing the battle upon which hangs the fate of nations, though

the parent is watching the last minutes on earth of the loved one—yet unconsciousness steals upon him despite every resolution and effort to fight off the weakness.

Not only that, but the strongest mind cannot recall the moment when his senses fled from him.

Arlos was seated as I have described, alert and watchful, and certain that he could maintain his vigil through the remaining hours of the night, when his head bowed forward, and to all intents and purposes, life was gone from him.

Budd Slogan was one of those who have the power of awakening at any moment previously fixed in his mind. It was not five minutes past twelve when he opened his eyes, flung aside his blanket and sat up, as fully himself as when holding the glass of his young friend leveled at the distant camp fire.

A moment's listening brought a suspicion of the truth. He pronounced the name of Arlos several times, gradually increasing the loudness of the tone, but without bringing any answer.

"Just what I expected," he muttered, moving cautiously about until he could get the "lay of the land."

This did not require long. He found where Arlos sat asleep and discovered that the animals had

not been harmed or stolen. Nothing had gone amiss despite the sluggard sentinel.

Budd made a guarded visit to where the ponies were lying, and finding no cause for alarm returned to his former position. There he seated himself on the ground, in the posture of the sleeping Arlos, and with the grim patience he had learned in his years of experience, assumed the duties of sentinel.

At such times the minutes pass slowly and the hours are intolerably long, but the man hardly stirred a muscle while the night was wearing away. Not once did he feel the slightest drowsiness.

When at last the growing light in the east told of the coming day, he was as alert as ever. Looking across at his young friend, he saw that he was still unconscious.

"I will leave him to wake for himself," reflected the guide.

Remembering that no food was at command, Budd decided to obtain it. The ponies had risen to their feet, and, after drinking from the small stream, renewed their cropping of the grass.

Budd thought it time enough to rebuild the fire when there was something to broil. So, rifle in hand, he set out in quest of game.

He had been gone perhaps half an hour when

Arlos Hayman opened his eyes and stared about him, unable for a minute or two to recall his wandering senses.

"By gracious!" he exclaimed, when it had all come back to him, "I must have fallen asleep! I forgot to wake Budd, and we have both slept through nearly the whole night. Well, nothing has happened to the horses."

Satisfied on this point, it was easy to explain the absence of his companion. Arlos concluded that he had awakened a few minutes before him and gone in quest of breakfast.

"I hope he won't forget to shoot enough for both. It seems to me that I am hungry all the time. I think I'll take a look around, myself."

And, without stopping to pick up his hat, where it had fallen while he was unconscious, the youth started on what may be termed his first hunt since leaving home.

It is the unexpected which generally happens. He supposed that in the natural order of events he would meet with no game, while Budd was certain to secure more than was needed, but the reverse was the fact.

"I wonder, if I run across anything, what it will be," he mused, as he picked his way forward, the gentle wind blowing the hair from his forehead.

"I believe they find grizzly bears, antelopes, wolves, deer——"

A smothered bellow caused him to turn his head like a flash. To his amazement he observed an immense buffalo bull, which was browsing in a small open space upon which Arlos had intruded without seeing the animal. The latter was quick to detect him.

It struck the young hunter as an odd fact that this enormous animal was alone instead of with a herd, but he supposed his companions were feeding near by and that they would speedily meet.

Those noble creatures, as my readers know, have been exterminated within the last few years by the wanton destruction of professional and amateur sportsmen. Where not long ago there were tens and hundreds of thousands, to-day there are none.

Although their number had been greatly thinned out at the time of Arlos Hayman's visit to the Rocky Mountains, enough were still met to afford excellent sport, though they frequented the open country far more than the mountainous regions.

The first thought of the youth, after recovering from his shock of surprise, was a natural one.

"You look to me, old fellow, as if you would make a good meal for us, provided Budd doesn't want more than his share,"

The bull was a combative fellow and disposed to resent this intrusion upon his domain. He stood with raised head and glaring eyes, the grass dripping from his jaws, as if expecting to see the young man break and fly before him, while there was yet time to escape his resistless charge.

Arlos stood a moment admiringly viewing the magnificent creature. He was the finest specimen by far upon which he had ever looked. He judged that he must be king of an immense herd, which could not be far away.

"I might be tempted to spare you, but for the fact that I'm so hungry I am sure to perish if I have to wait another half-hour for breakfast—great king!"

Well might Arlos utter the exclamation, for the bull, as if impatient over the tardiness of the daring intruder's flight, suddenly lowered his head, emitted a savage bellow, and charged the young man with might and main.

Naturally Arlos supposed that no more fatal spot could be found for lodging his bullet, since the animal's position made the heart inaccessible, than the head. Bringing his Winchester to his shoulder, therefore, he took a quick aim and let fly.

To his astonishment, the animal showed not the

slightest effects. His furious, headlong flight continued without check.

It is a fact that the bony structure in the head of the bison (improperly called the buffalo), often proves an effective armor against the most penetrating of firearms. So it was in this instance, seeing which, Arlos, with commendable coolness, quickly shoved another cartridge in place and fired again.

This time he aimed at the foreleg, knowing that a bullet there would cripple his enemy, even if it did not slay him.

Such was the fact. With a bellow of pain, the hugh creature stumbled and plowed forward on his head and knees, striving fiercely to gain his feet.

At this moment he was so close to Arlos that the latter ran several rods, afraid of becoming entangled in his throes. Wheeling quickly, however, he hastily prepared another cartridge and anxiously looked for a chance to use it.

He was astonished to see that the brute had regained his feet and was striving to reach him. The animal is of a low degree of intelligence, but this one was not long in comprehending that something was amiss. He stopped his struggles and stood motionless on three legs.

Arlos slipped to one side, and the next moment

sent a bullet into the body directly back of the foreleg.

That settled matters, for the missile was so truly aimed that it bored its way through the seat of life, and the king buffalo, with a half-smothered bellow, sagged forward, turned heavily on his side, and ceased to move.

"Purty well done, younker ! You've been luckier than me!"

It was Budd Slogan who called to Arlos. He was a short distance off when he heard the youth's Winchester, and not knowing what it might signify, ran to the spot.

"It seems to me," remarked the youth, contemplating the mountainous animal with no little satisfaction, "that he is unusually large, Budd."

"I've killed hundreds of them critters on the Llano Estacado, and dozens of different prairies, but I don't think I ever fetched down a bigger bull than him."

"I'm proud to know that, but I'm worried over one thing."

"What's that?"

"I'm afraid there's not enough meat on him for our breakfast."

"Mebbe not," gravely replied Budd; "but it will sorter stay our appetites till we can find the

herd he's strayed from and kill a dozen more. We'll try it, anyway, and here's hopin' it won't keep you awake to-night when you're on watch."

The guide grinned and winked when the blushing Arlos looked reproachfully at him.

"I'm ashamed of myself, Budd, for I didn't think it possible. But then it gave you a chance to gain a full night's sleep, and we'll fix it better next time."

"Gave me a full night's sleep?" repeated the elder. "I woke at midnight, just as I said I would, and found you like a dead younker. You was sleeping so hard I thought it a pity to wake you, so I sot up till morning."

"Too bad! I can only apologize and repeat my promise, but if you were half as hungry as I, you wouldn't keep breakfast waiting."

CHAPTER VI.

FURTHER INTO THE WILDS.

THE keen-edged hunting-knife of the guide served him well. He first ran the point along the bison's spine, and then peeled the skin down each shoulder, from one of which he cut a steak, large enough, it would seem, to supply half a dozen persons with an all-sufficient meal.

The steak was carefully washed in the running brook, while Arlos busied himself in renewing the fire.

It would be hardly prudent for me to tell how much Budd Slogan and Arlos Hayman ate.

The youth advocated broiling still more of the steak and taking it with them, since, as he insisted, in a few hours they would be as hungry as before.

"It ain't worth the bother," replied Budd, rejecting the proposal. "As we push further into the mountains we'll find all the game we want."

"If you're sure of that," said Arlos, with pretended solicitude, "I'll take the risk, great as it is."

Accordingly it was so done. The horses were

saddled and bridled, and the two renewed their journey, following a sort of pass between the mountain ranges, where the progress was alternately difficult and easy.

The ground continued steadily rising, so that before noon a decided change of temperature was perceptible. Vast peaks towered on the right and left, the tops covered with snow, from which a chilling breath now and then reached the horses and their riders. The pass resembled scores of others in the Sierras and Rocky Mountain ranges that are the avenues through which emigrants formerly journeyed, and without the existence of which the early overland emigration to the Pacific coast would have been impossible.

This pass might be termed a canyon, and seemed to have been made at some remote age by a stupendous upheaval of nature which split the rock-ribbed ranges asunder.

This canyon was of varying width. In some places it was no more than a hundred feet across, while at others it expanded to three or four times that extent.

The bottom showed that at certain seasons, as during a cloudburst, an unusual melting of snow, or a great fall of rain, it was swept by a tumultuous torrent that carried everything before it.

Budd gave it as his opinion that many of the huge boulders and rocks, around which they were forced to pick their way, had been carried along for unknown miles by one of those inconceivably fierce currents of water.

A curious feeling was present with Arlos. It seemed to him when they made a turn in the canyon they had but to go a little further when they must confront a solid wall.

But Budd smiled at his fears. He had traversed the same pass several times, and knew that by making some changes of direction further on they could eventually reach the less broken country through which flow the White, the Green, and other rivers, with the Uintah, Snow, and Wahsatch ranges beyond.

There was no intention, however, of penetrating that far, since they would find all the hunting they could wish within the Rocky Mountains proper, where, too, Arlos was hopeful of meeting his old schoolmate and friend, Dolph Bushkirk.

Arlos told the story of his experience when acting as sentinel. He was surprised at the slight interest shown by the guide.

"I thought it was an Indian prowling round the camp for a chance to shoot one of us or run off with the horses," added the youth.

"Nothin' of that sort," replied his companion; "like enough it was a wolf or some smaller critter hunting for something to eat."

Budd scrutinized the sky with the keenness of one who had long since learned how to read the secrets of the weather as revealed by faint indications which most people would not notice.

The sun was shining brightly, with every promise of several days of ideal temperature. Yet he said:

"We'll catch it inside of twenty-four hours. It may be snow, hail, or rain and wind, but we're bound to have some kind of flurry."

To the surprise of Arlos Hayman, the progress continued easy and comparatively rapid until late in the afternoon. The canyon seemed to lose its distinctive character, for it broadened to such an extent that it resembled a valley or elevated tableland between the towering mountain walls. Water was abundant, grass plentiful, and traveling so smooth that, had they chosen, they could have ridden most of the distance on a swinging gallop. But there was no call to hurry, and their ponies were allowed to walk.

The air was crisp, but not uncomfortably so, and the tough little animals seemed to find the progress as pleasant as their riders.

The two had eaten so heartily in the morning

that they decided to make only one more meal which naturally was set for the close of the afternoon, though it need not be said that the younger hunter, at least, felt like gratifying his appetite long before the hour fixed by the other.

"I must gain Budd's respect," he reflected, "by proving that I am able to undergo hardship, suffering, and hunger like a seasoned veteran. If I am weak and whimsical, I will go down to zero in his estimation. So I will endure like a martyr the pangs of starvation caused by ten hours' fast. He shall not hear a murmur from me if he decides to wait a half-hour longer before dining."

The ground was so undulating that when the afternoon was well along Budd said they were hardly fifty feet higher than when they left camp in the morning. Furthermore, they could pass entirely through this portion of the Rocky Mountains with but little increase of altitude.

"It is cold enough here," he said; "in the winter when the snow lays forty feet deep in some of the gullies, to freeze the stirrups apart under your feet, but the season is too far along for us to be bothered by anything like that now."

The lofty mountain peaks hid the sun from sight, though its rays were gilding the summits when the two drew rein with the purpose of camping for the

night. The spot selected by Budd Slogan was the most inviting that had yet met the eyes of the youth, who was impressed from the first with the magnificent scenery on every hand. He was sure that no finer site could have been found had they searched for weeks.

They were still in the valley-like depression between the ranges, with an abundance of succulent grass and clear running water. A stream not deep, but several rods in width, as clear as crystal and as cold as if it had just come from a dissolving iceberg, flowed through the middle of the valley, and the banks, as far as the vision extended, were green with the blades that had so recently sprung into life.

There was food in plenty for the cattle "on a thousand hills."

The sloping sides of the valley were broken here and there by immense brown masses of rock, and oddly tumbled bowlders, some of which were so heaped together as to show rough structures as large as a city building.

When Arlos noticed dried sticks, limbs, branches, and even large trees scattered here and there at a considerable distance from the stream, Budd explained that they had been brought down from the mountains during the spring freshets, or by an unusual flow of water.

"I remember seeing that stump of a tree twelve years ago," he said, pointing to a decaying trunk near at hand; "and since it was old at that time, it must be purty well seasoned now. In them rocks there to the right, two of us stood off a dozen Injins for a couple of days and nights, and that's where we're going to make our headquarters for some weeks to come."

In answer to Arlos' look of surprise, the guide said that they had now reached a point where their ponies were of no further use. They would be turned loose to graze until needed again, while their riders amused themselves in hunting through the surrounding region.

"Are they not liable to be stolen?" asked Arlos.

Budd shrugged his shoulders.

"We must take our chances; we're no more likely to lose 'em here than if we tried to keep 'em by us, further in the mountains. When me and the boys was spending our time along the beaver runs that's what we had to do, and we gin'rally found our ponies when we wanted 'em. If we didn't, we hoofed it or borrowed others."

In accordance with the plan of the guide, the saddles, bridles, and everything were taken from the animals and carried into a sort of rude cave

among the bowlders, which Arlos did not notice until it was pointed out by his companion.

This natural opening was about a dozen feet in extent, covered and walled in on three sides, but with the fourth half open or exposed. The shelter, therefore, which it offered was only partial, though much preferable in severe weather to the open air.

"We'll stay there to-night," said Budd, "and I hope we'll find our things and our ponies when we're ready to set out for the Miners' Delight."

It took but a few minutes to stow away their goods. More than an hour of daylight remained.

"How is that gentle appetite of yours?" suddenly asked the guide, when they stood on the outside of their rocky home.

"I think I can stand it a few minutes longer," replied Arlos, with a grave countenance.

"Stand what?"

"The hunger that is gnawing at my vitals."

"Wal, now, if you'll gather a lot of the wood you see scattered round here to start a good roaring fire, I'll make a hunt for supper."

"Be assured that I won't neglect my part. Will it be buffalo, bear, antelope, mountain sheep, or what?"

"Can't tell; depends on what I run across."

"That's right, Budd, that's right; don't be par-

ticular. Shoot the first game you set your eyes on, if it's a wolf. Don't wait to choose; the crisis is too serious."

Budd Slogan laughed as he swung off with his Winchester ready for service.

"He's a comical fellow, but I like him; I wonder if he always carries round an appetite like that. It leaves my thirst a thousand miles out of sight."

CHAPTER VII.

A MONARCH OF THE WILDERNESS.

LEFT alone once more Arlos Hayman set about gathering wood for the fire needed to cook their supper.

"I wonder what Dr. Kleinman and father and mother and Miriam would think," he mused, "if they could see me now. They would say I was entirely well, and might go home to them, but I don't expect to do so for a good while yet. I'm enjoying myself too much. Besides, I need more time to build up my strength so it will stay built up."

On the same side of the stream, but some distance up the sloping bank of the valley, was a grove of pines, the trunks standing near together, like tall columns, supporting their roofs of branches, which cast a shadow so deep that the sun's rays never pierced it. Nothing seemed more likely than that in this grove would be found not only many dried cones that had fallen from the trees, but a plentiful supply

of twigs and branches so seasoned by years of death that a tiny match would be sufficient to ignite them.

Arlos started for the spot, intending to collect his last armful of fuel, with which to kindle the fire for the evening meal.

Not a thought of danger entered his head while he walked toward the grove, nor after he had stepped between the trees. He was thinking only of the preparations for supper, and wondering how long it would be before Budd Slogan returned.

He had not heard the report of his gun, and was disappointed that so much time must elapse before satisfying his gnawing hunger.

"After he shoots his game he will bring it, or a portion of it, back to the fire, which will have to burn awhile before there will be coals enough to broil it. I wonder whether he has any idea of my suffering——"

It is a truth that we are sometimes warned of danger before we see or hear anything of it. Not the faintest sound struck the ear of the youth, nor did he notice anything. All the same, however, he paused abruptly in his communing, and, with a startled shudder, looked around, absolutely certain that some personal peril was upon him.

The sight which met his gaze was sufficient to

tingle the nerves of the most intrepid hunter, holding the trustiest of weapons in hand.

Hardly fifty feet distant was a grizzly bear—his size so mountainous that at first Arlos thought he was some species of monster with double the bulk of that forest monarch.

As in the case of the bison, he had descried the intruder first. Without emitting a growl or sound, he reared partly on his hind legs and looked at him—that and nothing more.

There was that in the vast size of the brute, his peculiar posture, and his perfect silence that made the situation more fearfully impressive than if he had emitted a warning growl and lumbered forward on all fours. It was unnatural, terrible, awe-inspiring.

Arlos was petrified. He could only stand and stare at the formidable beast, too appalled to retreat. The bear remained half-upright for a moment or two, and then dropped to his natural posture. His head was still in sight, with the horrible jaws parted, displaying his red, cavernous mouth and his tongue and gleaming teeth.

What animal seized in the embrace of such a brute, or receiving a blow from one of his beam-like paws, could stand for an instant before him?

These and similar thoughts rushed through the

brain of Arlos Hayman as he stood for a few awful seconds in front of the monster, who, had he chosen to advance, could have crushed the youth to pulp as if he were an eggshell.

And he was without a weapon with which to defend himself! True, his revolver was in his hip pocket, underneath his coat, but had he emptied every chamber into the front of the grizzly it is probable that the brute would hardly have been aware of it. The bullets would have been about as effective as so many paper wads.

There was but one wild, irrestrainable desire in the mind of Arlos Hayman: that was to get away as quickly as he could, to reach his Winchester, or some place of refuge among the rocks.

Pausing just long enough to pull himself together, Arlos turned and ran as never before. When in his usual health he was a superb sprinter, and he now gave an exhibition that would have won him the championship could it have been placed on record.

He did not glance over his shoulder at his terrible pursuer. He was sure he heard him crashing among the trees and across the open space with a speed surpassing that of a race horse. He caught his deep breathing and felt his hot, musky breath upon his neck and shoulders. It seemed as if each second must be his last.

The terrified fugitive saw where his Winchester was leaning against the bowlders close to the pile of wood. The distance was short, and he was running hard, but it seemed he would never reach it.

Straining every nerve, however, he plunged headlong, almost falling on his knees as he snatched the weapon and whirled about to begin shooting at the savage brute.

The grizzly was nowhere in sight.

The panting youth could not believe the evidence of his own eyes. What had become of the monster? Whither had he vanished? Was it all his distorted fancy that had conjured up an ogre among the pines?

Impossible. He had seen the most gigantic of grizzly bears, and had been within fifty feet of him.

He was mistaken in supposing the animal pursued him in his flight from the spot; but that he was still among the pines, hardly a hundred yards distant, Arlos Hayman had no more doubt than he had of his own existence.

Convinced that he was safe for the moment, the young hunter's next wonder was why the bear had not followed him. Had he chosen to do so, assuredly nothing could have saved the fugitive. Should he still emerge from the grove, it was

doubtful whether the Winchester with its numerous charges would check him.

And believing that he would still appear, Arlos began a hasty search for a spot that would give him refuge from the beast. The cavern could not serve, for it was so open at the front that the bear could force his body, large as it was, into any portion of it.

At one side a cavity showed beneath the largest rock. Stooping down and peering into the dark slit, Arlos fancied that he might crawl far enough beneath to be beyond reach of the brute's paws.

"If he comes for me I'll try it," he muttered, glancing affrightedly around.

Now that he had reason to believe a safe retreat was at hand (for his first fear that the animal might overturn the rock disappeared after sober reflection), Arlos regained his natural courage.

"I would be proud to say I had shot a grizzly," he thought, looking wistfully at the grove. "I could cut off his claws and take them home, and they would prove the truth of what I boasted about; but I have heard too much of these animals to run the risk."

He took several steps toward the pines, but was prudent enough to check himself, before going further.

"I may have another chance before I go home, and I would like to have Budd within call, for I would be pretty certain to need him."

From where he stood Arlos scrutinized the pines for some evidence of the grizzly, but was unable to detect any. They were as silent and motionless as if they had never contained a living thing.

He was still speculating over the strange situation, when to his joy he caught sight of Budd Slogan, coming along the bank of the stream, his course being such that it must take him close to the grove of pines. He shouted and held up something large in his hand to prove that he had been successful, even though the youth had not caught the faintest report of his Winchester.

"And that reminds me," Arlos exclaimed, setting down his gun again, drawing out his matchesafe, and stooping in front of the dried cones and twigs which were waiting to be kindled.

They were arranged so well and the fuel was so inflammable that before Budd reached the spot the flames were roaring and cracking right merrily.

"It's mountain sheep this time," explained the guide as he came up; "the best kind of a meal, too, which you don't often get in the Rockies."

"I have heard of the animal and hoped to see one."

"More'n likely you won't have a glimpse of a mountain sheep all the time you're in these parts ; but if you do, you won't get a shot at 'em."

"You succeeded," said Arlos, with a smile.

"I b'l'ever I'm older than you, but in my case the whole thing was accerdental. The sheep was browsing on the top of one of the ranges off yonder to the west when I first sighted him. He was too fur away to make sure with my rifle, and I didn't expect to give him much of a scare even ; but while I was looking and admiring him, and thinking what a fine supper he would make for you and me, for he must have weighed nigh on to two hundred pounds, something scared him. It might have been a mountain lion that was trying the sneak act on him. I seen him raise his head, look behind him, take two or three steps, stop, start forward agin, and then he made a jump straight over into a gorge that was five hundred feet high if it was five inches."

"I have heard of animals committing suicide when they saw no way of escape from their pursuers," interjected Arlos.

"There warn't no suicide in this critter's medicine. He knew what he was doing, and if it hadn't been for me he would have been safe."

"But, Budd, think of a jump of five hundred feet, or even one hundred feet !"

“Ain’t nothin’ for a mountain sheep; but onderstand me: I don’t mean to say he plumped straight down to the bottom of the gorge, for it stands to common sense that no animal that ever lived could do that without being smashed to smithereens. You see the gorge warn’t very wide. The sheep made his jump, and landed on a ledge on t’other side that warn’t bigger’n my hand, but it gave him a second to gather himself, when he made a jump to t’other side, striking at a p’int twenty feet or so lower down, where he catched on another bit of stone, and he come back agin. It was for all the world like a rubber ball, bouncing and wabbling from side to side, till it reached the bottom of the gorge without a jar.

“When the sheep landed the last time it was within a dozen yards of where I was scrooging ag’inst the side of the gorge. He catched sight of me and whirled to run, but of course I saved him from that trouble. I fetched enough along to make us a supper and breakfast. I washed it in the stream afore I seen you, so all we are waiting fur is the coals.”

“And they will soon be ready.”

While the meal was preparing Arlos told of the great fright he had received through his meeting with the grizzly bear.

"Yes," replied Budd, in his matter-of-fact tone, "we sometimes run agin these critters in this part of the world, though there's not so many as there used to be. Keep an eye on the wood, while I'm busy, and if he shows hisself, why, we'll have a little argyment with him."

"I suspect it will be a pretty big argument," commented the youth, who, however, did not let the prospect interfere with his evening meal.

By the time this was finished it was growing dark. The bear had not appeared, and rifle in hand Budd Slogan set out to hunt for him.

Arlos asked the privilege of taking part, but the guide promised that if the brute was still among the trees, which he doubted, he would call to him to help in the sport.

It turned out as Budd suspected—the bear had made a change of quarters.

"I guess you scared him away," remarked the veteran, as he came back.

"If he was scared one-tenth as much as I, he isn't done running yet."

"Like enough you're the first two-footed animal he has ever seen. Howsumever, he may pay us another visit to-night; we'll look out for him."

"Are not our ponies in danger?"

"No; they are nimbler than old Ephraim, and

won't let him get nigh enough to hurt 'em. But no mistake, one of them critters is an ugly fellow to drive into a corner. The smell of our cooking meat may bring him round the camp, and you and me wouldn't more'n make him a square meal."

The night was colder then they had before experienced.

The arrangement for guard duty was similar to that at the preceding camp: Arlos was to act the part of sentinel until midnight, when Budd would take his place. Earlier than before the guide withdrew to the cavern, where he stretched out his blanket and sank into deep, refreshing slumber. He advised Arlos to keep the fire going, since there was an abundance of wood, and the grizzly, like all wild animals, is afraid of fire, which might be found more effective in battling with him than their Winchester rifles.

The youth was resolved not to repeat the mistake of the previous night. This time he had a tangible, unmistakable peril impending, and was without the ponies to warn him of its approach. They had wandered so far up the valley that they were beyond sight when the afternoon drew to a close.

It seemed to Arlos that he would have no difficulty in keeping alert. Having thrown fresh fuel on the fire he seated himself as before, but it was

with the resolve that upon the first approach of drowsiness he would rise to his feet and by violent exercises drive it off again. He had only to follow this course to perform his duty faithfully.

Besides, the certainty that the huge enemy was more than likely to appear produced a marked effect in helping him to fight off his tendency to sleep.

He recalled that Budd had again failed to give him instructions about calling him in the event of disturbance, and he determined not to do so unless it should become imperatively necessary.

“He has placed much responsibility upon me, and I’m resolved to meet it like a man.”

And the very test Arlos Hayman feared was not long in coming to him.

CHAPTER VIII.

A GREAT EXPLOIT

"ELEVEN o'clock," repeated Arlos Hayman, as he replaced his watch in his pocket ; "one hour more and Budd goes on duty. I begin to feel a little drowsy."

He placed his rifle against the bowlder beside him and threw more wood on the fire. He stretched his arms over his head, and standing within the circle of light thrown out by the blaze, looked around in the gloom and listened with his senses on the alert.

The situation recalled that of the previous night. The same solemn stillness held reign, and the world of darkness inclosed him on every hand.

Now and then he heard the faint rustle of the stream as the current slightly changed its course, but no other noise pierced the night.

The sky was studded with stars, there being no moon until long past midnight, and even then it would be only partly full. The air continued chilly,

so that the warmth thrown out by the flames was acceptable, and when Arlos drew his blanket around him its clasp was pleasant.

His thoughts were of the monstrous animal that had terrified him a number of hours before. He preferred to meet him again when it was daylight, though he did not forget what Budd Slogan had told him about the help he was likely to receive from the fire, of which all animals are naturally afraid.

“I wonder what that is!”

Peering out in the gloom it seemed to him that a portion of the darkness was becoming more distinctly marked than the rest. It was as if looking down into a deep body of water, one sees a part roiled or murky.

Where all was black, a portion was blacker than that which surrounded it.

“That’s odd,” he muttered, leaning forward and striving to penetrate the darkness. “There can’t be anything the matter with my eyes.”

A cold shiver ran down his back. Peering at the mass of deeper shadow, he caught a phosphorescent glow showing at two points near together. It was produced by the reflection of light from the eyes of some animal. At the same moment he heard a low, cavernous growl.

The grizzly bear had arrived.

The outlines of the animal were so dimly shown at first that Arlos failed to identify him, but now he wondered that he had not recognized the brute at once.

The situation was similar to that which the youth had had in mind from the first. He thought the bear would approach unseen in the darkness until at hand, when he would stop because of the blaze that confronted him.

It was clear that it was that which acted as a check. He had probably caught the odor of meat and was on a tour of investigation. But for the burning wood, he would have borne down on the youth without halt or hesitation.

Arlos reached out, and seizing a couple of the largest sticks flung them on the blaze. They temporarily obscured the flames and he drew a little closer to the fire, which quickly rallied and widened its circle of illumination.

There was the magnificent monster, clearly revealed in the gloom in all his astounding proportions. With the same odd tendency he had shown during the afternoon, he reared on his hind feet and stood nearly erect.

As he did so he was in plain view, for the glare of the fire was increasing. Arlos brought his

Winchester to his shoulder, aimed beneath the fore-legs and blazed away, following the first shot with three others in rapid succession.

A muttering growl as the bear dropped upon all fours left no doubt that he had been hit hard enough to feel a stinging pain.

Now that the young hunter had opened the bombardment, he kept it up until he had fired four more times. Then he stopped, not that he might hold the reserve for other emergencies, but because the grizzly, instead of tumbling over and pawing the air, swung ponderously toward the young gentleman, as if he recognized the author of the injuries he had received, and intended to settle accounts with him.

"Gracious! he must be mad!" exclaimed Arlos, stating a very self-evident fact, as he seized the protruding end of a large burning stick; "he doesn't care for my rifle, and if this won't stop him, I'm in trouble."

He had dropped his gun, and, with the blazing torch in hand and held in front and above his head, he advanced toward "Old Ephraim."

If Arlos had been better acquainted with such visitors, it is more than probable he would have felt considerable concern, for bullets would have made but little impression on the grizzly until after the

learning was too late to benefit the young hunter. Such an animal has been known to carry "his own point" even after many ounces of lead have been fired into his carcass, and he who would depend upon a blazing brand as his only means of defense may not always be able to say with reasonable certainty that he can safely withstand a decided charge.

The bear halted. He was at last confronted by a style of attack which he feared. It is not probable that he had had much if any experience with burning wood, but his instinct told him to beware of so mysterious an enemy.

Ten feet separated bear and youth when at the same instant the two paused and contemplated each other.

They formed a striking tableau. The brute again reared and used his paws as if he believed the wound were produced by splints or slivers thrust into the flesh, and he was trying to pull them out.

Arlos kept the torch gently swaying to prevent a weakening of the blaze, and with one foot extended peered under the glare of the brand, never once removing his eyes from the animal.

The rearing posture was held but a minute, when he again dropped upon all fours. Arlos slightly

recoiled, believing he was about to advance, but instead of doing so the grizzly swung round and made off in the gloom. He had evidently investigated as far as he desired.

Instantly the youth flung down the torch, and catching up his rifle let fly with a couple of shots, though whether he struck the animal was uncertain. If he did hit him, he caused little damage.

"Don't chase him," said Budd Slogan, who, awakened by the noise, had come out of the cave to learn the cause.

"Do you think I killed him?"

"What sort of shots did you make?"

Arlos related what had taken place.

"Them shots that you landed when he was on his hind legs hurt him; whether enough to make him pass in his checks can't be told afore to-morrer. The chances, howsumever, are that he'll be all right in a few days and won't know he's been hit at all."

"He must have half a dozen bullets in his body at the least, and he wasn't ten yards off when I planted them there. If they don't finish him I never want to meet one of the animals alone, unless I have a loaded cannon pointed at him."

"You may well say that, for though a lucky shot sometimes brings one of 'em down it giner'ly takes a dozen or twenty; and if what you said

about the size of this old Ephraim is true, we may have to use up all our cartridges on him."

"Do you think he is likely to come back to-night?"

"Can't say, but you may as well crawl into the cave, and I'll stand guard till morning."

"It is only half-past eleven," said Arlos.

"It isn't worth while for me to lie down agin, but, if you wish, you may set up for a time. How did you keep awake?"

"I made up my mind to do it, and did it."

"You can make up your mind all you want to sometimes and it won't help you. I've been so sleepy when out with Carson or some of the boys that I had to set sticks under my eyelids to keep 'em open, and that didn't always do it."

"When I found I was becoming drowsy I rose to my feet and moved around until I had driven off the feeling."

"That's the best plan, but you can see, as I said, that when a chap's in the Injin country it isn't safe for him to do that, if the varmints are crawling through the grass or looking for a chance to pick him off. I say, my boy, if you will take your rifle and creep out among them trees, I'm purty sartin you'll find your game."

Arlos looked off through the gloom toward the

pine grove where he had met the monster that afternoon. The solemn stillness, broken only by the soft rustle of the stream near at hand, and that deep, almost inaudible murmur of the solitude, with the darkness and the loneliness of the scene, were awe-inspiring. The idea of stealing across the open space and entering the impenetrable shadows of the grove of trees, with the almost certain prospect of stumbling over a wounded and gigantic grizzly bear, was enough to make the bravest man tremble.

"Budd," said he, in a low, earnest voice, "between where we are sitting and the Pacific Ocean are billions of dollars' worth of gold yet unmined. If it were all taken from the ground, placed in one pile and offered to me if I would do what you propose, I would not take the offer. Would you?"

"No," was the reply; "and any man that would do it would be a fool. Come, the best thing you can do is to sleep."

"You are right; good night."

With this parting, Arlos Hayman groped his way into the cavern with his blanket, which he spread on the flinty floor, his saddle serving for a pillow. It was another proof of his high health that within a few minutes he was sound asleep and did not open his eyes until daylight, when the guide

called him by name with the announcement that breakfast was waiting.

Budd reported that nothing had been seen of the bear, and there was no doubt that he was badly wounded.

“Which the same being the case, the wonder is that he didn’t grow crazy with madness and come tearing round here, caring nothing for the fire so that he could chaw us up in two or three mouthfuls.”

“Now that we have the light to help us, shall we look for him?”

“My idee purcisely ; come on.”

When they examined the ground where the beast had stood when Arlos attacked him, traces of blood were discovered on the grass.

“You hit him hard and no mistake,” was the comment of the guide, taking the well-marked trail which led directly to the grove ; “perhaps we shall come upon him among them trees. Keep a little further back of me so I will have plenty of elbow room.”

The fear of Arlos was that his friend being thus placed would gain the first sight of the royal game and perhaps give him his finishing touch. Having already done so much, the youth was anxious to complete his exploit.

He ventured to express his wish, and was relieved when Budd told him in his terse way :

“Don’t fret ; I’ll let you have the best show I kin.”

On the edge of the grove the guide paused for a moment and held up his hand without turning his head, as a signal for Arlos to wait where he was.

Budd was peering among the shadows and listening. When he stepped between the trees it was with the noiselessness of an Indian scout.

The youth kept his eyes upon his friend until he was partly hidden from sight. When only his head and shoulders were visible he turned his face and beckoned to Arlos to join him. The latter hurriedly obeyed with guarded steps.

“Never mind ’bout that,” called Budd ; “come here as quick as you kin.”

“What have you found?” asked Arlos, as he came up.

“Look for yerself.”

Glancing in the direction indicated by Budd’s finger, the heart of Arlos fairly rose in his throat, for there, like a hillock of blackness, lay the bear-stone dead !

“Yunker, you’ve done something to be proud of ; you’ve killed one of the biggest old Ephraims that ever lived in the Rocky Mountains.”

Such was the fact, and no one can censure the youth because a flush of proud pleasure glowed through his frame. The exploit was one that had never been surpassed by Budd Slogan, who had hunted in the great West before Arlos Hayman was born.

“Do you want to carry the carcass home to show your friends, so as to sorter back up the story, which none of them won’t be likely to b’lieve?”

“I would take his hide if there was any convenient way of doing it.”

“It would be too big a job,” said his friend, after a moment’s thought, which showed he had not wholly dismissed the scheme; “but when you show them claws they’ll be enough to prove you ain’t lying.”

The two forepaws were cut off, so as to preserve the prodigious claws, several of which were fully six inches long. What a terrific foe the brute would have been in a hand-to-hand fight !

These trophies were taken back to the cavern and left with the trappings, in the hope that they would be found there when the two were ready to turn their steps homeward.

The hunters were now ready to take up the pleasure that had brought them thus far. They were among the grand scenery of the famous Middle

Park, which even at this day offers sport surpassed nowhere else in the world. Canyons, ravines, gorges, streams, and towering peaks confronted them, amid which were to be met bears, panthers, wolves, antelope, deer, mountain lions, sheep, and smaller game, with possibly a lawless character now and then to lend additional spice to the experience.

Although some of the fiercest encounters of Budd Slogan with red men had taken place in this very section, he made light of any repetition of that form of peril. With the completion of the Union Pacific Railway and the development of the West, with the innumerable towns and villages dotting nearly every every part of the country, the Indians had either become friendly or had withdrawn deeper into the solitudes where Budd did not propose to disturb them.

He shared the general prejudice of his class against the aborigines. He heartily subscribed to the declaration that the only good Indian is a dead one, and asserted that he would not trust the best of them.

At the same time, he insisted that as a people they were cowards. More than once he had stood off a dozen warriors, and the belief that some of them were likely to be met in the region where he and

Arlos intended to hunt did not cause him the slightest uneasiness on account of his companion, who had never encountered a hostile.

“I’ve rid right through a village of ’em,” Budd said, “where every squaw, buck, and pappoose was a yearning to wipe me out, and the reason they didn’t do it was ’cause they seen that I knowed what they felt and was sartin to kill the first one or two that opened the circus. You see they couldn’t begin the fun without that happening, and there warn’t any of ’em patriotic enough to sacrifice himself for the others, so I kept my ha’r on my head. If you happen to tumble over a lot of ’em, don’t let ’em think you’re afeared ; keep your eyes open and you’ll be all right.”

CHAPTER IX.

A STRANGE PERIL.

BEFORE setting out on the hunt for the day, Budd Slogan and Arlos Hayman looked up their ponies. They were found half a mile up the valley contentedly cropping the nourishing grass. Provided they received no attention from hostile men and animals, they were likely to enjoy the jaunt fully as much as their owners.

Now, while it is often advantageous for two men to hunt in company, it is not always prudent for them to keep near each other, for the vigilant game is more likely to detect their approach. So it was that when the friends had penetrated a considerable distance further without descrying any animals, Budd paused in front of a narrow gorge opening into the valley, his purpose being to make a change in their manner of procedure.

The gorge itself was barely a dozen yards in width, the rough walls towering almost perpendicularly upward for fully five hundred feet. In some

places the height was even greater. The bottom was comparatively level and dry.

"My idee is that we shall divide for the rest of the day," said Budd, after they had studied their surroundings for some minutes; "when you see the afternoon is purty well along, which the same you can tell by your watch, without squinting at the sun, why, strike a line for our headquarters, where I'll meet you afore dark."

"Do you think there is no danger of my becoming lost?"

"The only way you kin get lost is to shet your eyes, walk backwards, turn flip-flaps for half an hour, with your eyes shet all the time. But," added the guide, with more becoming manner, "you will walk up this gorge for a mile more or less. Being as there ain't any way you kin climb out of it, I don't see how you kin manage to lose yourself, even if you do as I told you. I've never been to the end of the gorge, but it's too fur for you to tramp. You've got your gun and revolver, and are likely to have a chance to use 'em both afore you show up in camp to-night."

"And where will you hunt?"

"I'll move to the west; I won't go very fur from the gorge, so that I can find you if it's necessary."

Arlos suspected that his friend had planned all

this so as to drive some game in front of him. Exactly how he would do it the youth could not explain, in view of the peculiarly different positions the two would hold.

The proposal was so simple that no explanation was needed. As they were on the point of separating, Budd said :

"It may be that you'll want me, but it ain't likely. If you do, why, fire your gun twice, as quick as you kin ; if you want me powerful bad, fire three times, and if I hear it I'll get to you as soon as I know how."

"And the same if you should wish me to join you?"

The guide smiled at the idea of needing help from this young tenderfoot ; and yet his common sense told him that just such a need might arise. Stranger things than that had occurred in his history.

"Yes ; that's the idee. I'll do precisely the same," he replied, with a nod of his head.

The next minute he had passed from view up the valley, which was of much the same nature as where they had established their headquarters.

Left to himself, Arlos Hayman spent no time in idleness. He was now fairly launched upon the enterprise which had brought him where he was.

He was alone in one of the wildest sections of the Rocky Mountains.

Brief as was the time he had been there, it was sufficient for him to have brought down unaided an immense bison, and, far greater than that, a grizzly bear of colossal size.

Had he not won his spurs? Had he not established his ability to take care of himself in whatever might remain to confront him? What though the veteran Budd Slogan left him alone, was he in need of any mentor or defender?

Now, I am glad to say that Arlos Hayman was altogether too modest and sensible to answer these questions as many a youth in his situation would have answered them.

He did not forget that such fortune as had come to him was not likely to be repeated in his lifetime. Dangers much less, according to common estimation, than those through which he had passed, could readily prove fatal, and he determined to put forth all the discretion and skill of which he was master, even if he knew Budd Slogan was within call.

With his trusty Winchester slung over his shoulder he strode up the gorge, glancing to the right and left, as well as in front and behind him, with a scrutiny now and then of the tremendous walls rising on either hand,

"If Budd intends to drive some game in front of me, I don't see how he will manage it, for they will have to jump down the ravine, in which case there won't be any need of my wasting any shots on them. It may be that some other gorge opens into this, which he intends to utilize, or, what is just as likely, he intends to leave me alone."

Here and there the face of one of the walls was so rough that it looked possible for him to climb to the top by clinging to the projections; but it need not be said that no such intention entered his mind. There were enough risks to face without seeking them out.

He had gone a quarter of a mile when he caught his first sight of game. A noble mountain buck was descried standing on the edge of the ravine, where the height was fully half a thousand feet.

He was perched on the very margin, so that another step would take him over, but the veteran mountain climber understood himself too well to commit any blunder like that.

"I think I can reach him with a bullet," was the reflection of the young hunter, as he came to a halt and prepared to make the shot; "then, if he falls, he will come down in front of me, and there'll be another choice dinner for us. I'll try it."

But he did not; for while in the act of leveling

his Winchester, the buck vanished like a flash. The keen-eyed animal had detected his danger and was gone, nor was it probable that he would show himself again.

Arlos was looking toward the point where he had disappeared when he observed that the sky above and beyond was as black as night. The murkiness seemed to cover only a small portion, for he could see the clear atmosphere further over and in front.

“Budd said we would catch something like that within twenty-four hours. It looks as if it may be a cyclone or hurricane, but I don’t imagine that it can trouble me—hello! that’s strange!”

At that moment he heard a rifle fired three times in quick succession.

It sounded from a point to the westward, and slightly up the ravine. That the reports came from the Winchester of Budd Slogan he could not doubt, nor could he question its meaning.

The guide was in imminent personal peril, and needed help without an instant’s delay.

Arlos Hayman was in sore distress. He was ready to risk his life for his friend, but how could he do it? He could not climb the side of the ravine, as he ascertained by a quick scrutiny of the walls. To return to the mouth of the gorge would compel

him to travel a quarter of a mile, and then make his way to his friend by a still longer and round-about course, for, as stated, the reports came from a point somewhat in advance.

If there was a cross ravine further along, he could reach and use it in less time, but he had no means of knowing whether such a recourse was at command, and to make the search must consume valuable time.

“What shall I do?” he asked himself, in an agony of doubt; “there must be some place where I can climb the side of the gorge. I’ll do it!”

He began rapidly retracing his steps, studying the walls and stopping several times, under the belief that he had discovered a spot which would permit of such ascent, but in each case he discerned a long stretch of smooth rock, at some part of the towering wall, which was a fatal block to his hopes.

He was still groping hurriedly back over his own trail, when to his consternation Budd Slogan’s rifle was fired again, and three times in rapid succession, as before!

“What can have happened to him? He must be in sore peril.”

Strange that in his distress Arlos Hayman did not dream that the signal might have been intended for his benefit, and that it was he who was threat

ened by an overwhelming danger from which he should not lose a moment in fleeing.

Convinced at last that the only thing he could do was to hurry out of the gorge (since the distance was now so reduced that it could be done as quickly as the ascent of one of the sides), Arlos broke into a run for the mouth of the ravine. He had so fixed the point whence the signals came that he was sure to keep it in mind though he had no idea of the nature of the ground over which he would have to make his way.

He was still running, when he abruptly paused. A loud, fast-increasing roar came from some point up the gorge. It swelled so rapidly that he was filled with dismay, as is one when threatened by a danger of whose nature he can form no conception.

Only for a minute or two was he left in doubt. He was starting up the ravine, which made a sharp bend, hardly a hundred yards distant, when a wave of water twenty feet in height plunged into view, as if fired from a gigantic piece of ordnance.

It struck the opposite rocks with so terrific an impact that the spray flew a dozen yards in the air. Then, with a recoiling swirl, it eddied fiercely, as if staggered by the fierceness of the repulse, and dashed down the gorge with a speed and momentum beyond conception.

That one glance told Arlos Hayman the fearful story. There had been a cloud-burst directly over the ravine and only a short way off. The immense mass of water, descending between the narrow walls, was rushing downward with inconceivable force and velocity. It must soon spend itself, but until it did so it would hew a path of death and destruction.

Budd Slogan, with the appearance of the halting cloud directly over the gorge, had comprehended the peril of his young friend, and fired his gun as a warning for him to come without a second's delay.

Even as Arlos stared at the rush of water he heard the signal of his friend repeated for the third time. The shots were closer, as if the guide was rushing toward the ravine in the hope of giving help to the youth.

One glance at the torrent, roiled and muddied because of the dirt and *débris* which it had caught up in its fierce plunge, was enough. Arlos turned and ran with his utmost speed down the ravine, hoping, but not believing, he could reach the outlet in time to save himself.

When that awful flood visited Conemaugh Valley, in Pennsylvania, on the last day of May, 1889, and annihilated Johnstown, it traveled eighteen miles in seven minutes, faster than any human contriv-

ance has ever swept over the earth. The current plunging down the ravine behind Arlos Hayman had not the prodigious pressure to force it to such astounding speed, but as it was its fleetness was tenfold greater than that of which he was capable.

Suddenly Arlos felt the water about his feet and knees. He splashed forward a couple of steps, but in a twinkling was lifted from the ground and away he went, like an arrow fired from a bow, and with no more chance to help himself than if caught in the rapids below Niagara.

In such crises one's struggles are instinctive. The youth clung fixedly to his rifle and tried to swim. The dirty water filled with *débris* was so overwhelming that he was well-nigh strangled.

It was below, above, and on all sides; he fought to catch a breath of air, but it swirled over him again, until he felt that each second might be his last.

His blind, desperate struggles, however, continued, for what person relinquishes hope so long as life is left to him?

Those were fearful moments, and yet it is in such trying periods that a person's brain becomes a thousandfold more active than his body. Arlos was aware that he had inhaled some air with the choking water, and that there was a chance of his coming out of the rush with his life.

He was whirling along with such swiftness that he must soon reach the valley below, where the expansion of the torrent over so much surface would change it into a harmless, meandering stream, in which he could become his own master again.

The imminent peril was that of being hurled against the side of the gorge, in one of the abrupt turns which occurred at several points between him and the valley. It needed but one catastrophe like that to settle his fate. A single impact against the wall would crush every bone in his body and reduce him to pulp.

Everything went with dizzying swiftness. He now had his eyes open and could form a slight conception of where he was going.

He saw the dark, towering walls on either hand sweeping backward so quickly that the eye could scarcely follow them, and he gasped when it seemed that he was about to be flung squarely against one of the masses of stone that lunged at him again and again before he was aware.

Was he mistaken or did he really catch a second's glimpse of the figure of his old friend, bending over the ravine, his bearded face white with horror at the sight of that which was below?

Arlos shut his eyes and braced himself for the shock, when, with the spray flung high in the air,

he saw the black wall apparently plunge toward him.

But not yet. Instead of striking it, he grazed along its front. He felt the rough surface scrape against his clothing, and then thrust him back into the torrent as if it would have none of him. He reached out his free hand in the instinctive grasping for support. He succeeded in seizing a projecting point, but the same instant was wrenched loose with such abrupt violence that a spasm of pain shot through the limb to the shoulder.

A fantastic action of the torrent gave the helpless youth an advantage which he never could have expected. The front, it may be said, outsped him, and he was borne forward in that portion which was comparatively quiet as compared with the rest, though it would be a mistake to suppose that any portion of the tumultuous rush bore the least approach to calmness.

Being at the surface Arlos was able to use his eyes. He could breathe, too, with some comfort. He might have done better had he let go of his rifle and allowed it to sink to the bottom. There would be a good chance of recovering it, since the torrent must soon exhaust itself, but it is a queer fact of human nature that it is sometimes swayed by trifling incidents and motives in the moments of

supreme peril. He held fast to his weapon and probably would have done so had he known that to drop it would insure his safety.

Suddenly he grasped another projecting point of stone. He thought for an instant his arm would be wrenched off, but he held on, and almost immediately noticed that the water was subsiding around him. The tugging at his body was momentarily decreasing and soon would wholly cease.

Just then some one seized his hand and pulled him upward to a ledge where there was secure support for the feet. He was safe at last.

“Well done, Budd! I hardly expected this——”

But Arlos checked himself, for the one that had helped him was not Budd Slogan.

CHAPTER X.

RA-LO-NO.

ARLOS HAYMAN was astonished indeed to discover that the hand which grasped his own and lifted him to a secure support upon a projecting ledge did not belong to his friend, Budd Slogan. Not only that, but the individual who had helped him was a young Indian, probably no older than himself.

The position of the two on the narrow ledge of rock brought them face to face, their bodies touching, so that the scrutiny was at close range too close indeed, for comfort.

"I am much obliged to you for your kindness," said Arlos. "I had a close call and can hardly understand even now how I escaped with my life."

The Indian made answer, but his words were in an unknown tongue, so far as the white youth was concerned, and it was equally evident that the young warrior had no comprehension of the English language.

The situation, however, was relieved of its embarrassment by the dusky friend pointing to the top of the gorge, nodding his head, and repeating some aboriginal expression. It was clearly an invitation for Arlos to climb to the level ground above, and he nodded in turn to signify that the proposal was acceptable to him, since nothing was to be gained by staying where he was.

Below was the rushing torrent, subsiding rapidly. When it should exhaust itself probably a hundred feet of perpendicular wall would remain, down which neither could make his way. Above, was three or four times that ascent, with a face so rough and jagged that it looked easy to climb.

Such must have been the fact, for the young Indian had descended it. His clothing was dry, and the gestures which he made left no doubt of his meaning.

The moment Arlos nodded his head the other said something which probably was an invitation for him to follow. The latter nodded again to signify he would do so.

Instantly the Indian began climbing. It was a treat to see him ascend the face of the rocky wall. Up he went, as nimbly as a sailor in the rigging of his ship. Not once did he hesitate until he was fully fifty feet above the other, when he abruptly

stopped and looked down, evidently surprised that Arlos remained standing on the ledge without making any effort to follow him.

There was good reason for Arlos maintaining a stationary position, for he was unable to imitate the other without abandoning his rifle, which he would not do.

Pausing at his lofty perch, the dusky fellow looked inquiringly down at the motionless white youth, who shook his head to signify that he could not do what he had promised. The reason for the refusal was so apparent that the Indian instantly began descending with the same graceful facility, and in an instant was at the other's side again.

Here Arlos could only look dumbly in his face and smile at his chatter. Suddenly the young warrior reached out his hand and took hold of the Winchester. He meant to carry it to the top of the ravine for his helpless friend, so as to leave him free to use both hands.

The "pale face" was in a quandary. The proposed aid would solve the difficulty, but could he trust the swarthy stranger?

True, he had just given proof of his friendship, but he might after all have a sinister motive beyond. To surrender the rifle would be to place himself at the mercy of one who belonged to the

race which Budd Slogan insisted was always treacherous by nature and education.

And yet it looked as if Arlos must do that, or wait where he was for the subsidence of the waters, drop his gun to the bottom of the gorge at the risk of injuring it, and then by a long detour recover it ahead of the Indian who would witness the action, and, if he chose, readily anticipate it.

It was a risky thing, no doubt, but with only a moment of hesitation, Arlos relinquished his weapon, and by another nod signified his acceptance of the proposal.

The Indian was a matchless climber, showing no more hesitation when deprived of the use of one hand than when both were free. All his limbs were immediately in motion, and he went up the side of the rock as before, never pausing, but frequently looking down with some exclamation, meant for encouragement, to his follower, who saw the broad, dusky face peering first on one side and then on the other of his active body, like the full moon through a mass of clouds.

Arlos used his time, prompted by a most uncomfortable misgiving, with desperate energy.

“When he gets to the top, how easy for him to turn and shoot me! He hasn’t any weapon of his own, so far as I saw, but he must know something

about the Winchester, and its bath in the torrent hasn't hurt it as much as it hurt me. If he doesn't wish to shoot me he can make off with the gun, and then I'll be in a pretty fix."

The eagerness to keep as near as he could to the fellow brought Arlos to the top only a few minutes behind him. Once, when near the end of his climb, the white youth touched his hand to his hip to make sure that his revolver was there, though, if the other meditated violence, the advantage was overwhelmingly on his side.

But Arlos had done the Indian injustice. He not only stood quiescent while the other was ascending, but leaned over, and again taking his hand, fairly drew him up the remaining few feet by sheer strength. The instant they stood side by side the dusky youth handed back the Winchester to Arlos, who expressed his thanks by profuseness of gesture.

"Ra-lo-no," repeated the Indian so many times, that Arlos concluded he meant to make known that that was his name.

"Ra-lo-no," said Arlos in turn, extending his hand, which was warmly shaken; "my name is Arlos-Arlos-Arlos!"

"Oogm!—ah—ooh—Arlos-Arlos-Arlos!"

And the two grinned and nodded their heads. At least they had learned each other's names,

though it was beyond their power to use any more words that could help them.

Arlos now made a more critical survey of his companion, who he believed was his friend, though not wholly free from misgiving concerning him.

He was a stocky, sturdy youth, with long black hair, parted in the middle and dangling about his shoulders. The broad face, of course, was beardless, and, instead of being attired in savage costume, he was dressed in as civilized a garb as Arlos Hayman himself. The coat was of thick texture, with a rolling collar, and was dark blue in color. The sleeves were rolled above the elbow, displaying a red flannel shirt beneath, which was open at the throat and without any tie. A thick blanket was wrapped about the body and flung over the left shoulder, while he wore ordinary trousers and thick shoes. If any of my readers have visited the civilized tribes in the Indian territory they have seen many counterparts of Ra-lo-no, who presented himself unexpectedly as the friend of Arlos Hayman.

The latter felt so grateful to him that he determined to express his feelings in some way, inasmuch as he could not fittingly do so in words.

In addition to his large hunting-knife, Arlos carried a handsome pearl-handled implement with four blades of fine temper and all very sharp. Drawing

it from his pocket, he hunted for a stick and then proved how keenly it would cut.

He closed that blade and tried two others in turn. The fourth was a file which he rubbed along his finger nails to show the purpose for which it was intended.

All this time Ra-lo-no stood attentively watching the action of his new acquaintance. The American race has the reputation of being melancholy and taciturn, rarely indulging in smiles or laughter, or giving way to emotion in any form, but no Caucasian could surpass Ra-lo-no in grinning ability. His naturally wide mouth threatened to endanger his ears, but the smile was the more pleasing because of the rows of white, even teeth which were absolutely perfect.

“Ra-lo-no, I am sure you will not deprive me of the pleasure of seeing you accept this slight testimonial of my distinguished consideration. I am aware that you can’t understand a word of what I am saying, and therefore I will add the clause which I suppose has been used probably five hundred million times since gift-making became popular ; this is presented to you, not because of its intrinsic worth, but as expressive of my esteem and admiration of your character.

In other words :

“ ‘When this you see,
Remember me.’ ”

“Allow me,” and bowing low, Arlos handed the knife to Ra-lo-no, who had stared hopelessly with his chronic grin while the speech was under way, but who instantly caught the meaning of the gesture.

Arlos has always insisted that he saw the ears of his Indian friend shift back to elude the corners of his mouth at the moment he comprehended how wealthy a young man he had been made by the munificence of the pale face. He repeated a jumble of words which were doubtless intended as an acknowledgment, but which were all “Greek” to Arlos. Nevertheless, he waved his hand and said airily:

“Don’t mention it, Ra-lo-no; I quite agree with your sentiments, which being the case, what’s the use of dwelling upon them? Now, if you have any views to express on the tariff question, I will be glad to listen, for I fear our sentiments may not be in accord. Still I always hold myself open to conviction.”

There was a certain enjoyment in this nonsense, for the improving health of Arlos and his safe deliverance out of peril put him in the best of spirits, but he felt also that there was food for serious

thought, and important matters claimed his attention.

It was not likely that Ra-lo-no would be in this neighborhood unless he had friends close by. There was no government reservation nearer than that of the Shoshones to the north, and it was not prudent to take it for granted that the other members of his tribe would evince the same comity that the youth had shown.

If Ra-lo-no was like most of the people whom Budd Slogan had met, it would not be strange if he was at heart a bitter and treacherous enemy, though Arlos could not believe this until he saw the proof.

The white youth's garments were saturated, and he had left his blanket at home. He was chilly, but he would not allow Ra-lo-no to perceive it, through fear that he would force his own blanket upon him, which he was resolved not to permit.

And yet Ra-lo-no did that very thing. Arlos, in spite of himself, shuddered slightly. Like a flash, and before he could protest, the young Indian flung the heavy blanket about his shoulders.

"I suppose I'll have to wear it," said the recipient, "and it doesn't feel bad, but remember, my good fellow, that it's only borrowed."

Another query that presented itself to Arlos was whether this good-hearted youth had not met Dolph

Bushkirk, who entered the region the previous week. It seemed reasonable to believe that such was the case, all of which might be true without giving Arlos any benefit, since he had no means of questioning him.

"I wonder where Budd can be," he suddenly thought, looking around him; "he fired his gun to hurry me out of the gorge, but the torrent did that job quicker than I could myself. I don't know whether he can talk the language of Ra-lo-no, but I've heard him say that Indians can understand each other by means of signs, when they may not know a word of spoken language. If he were here he could give help."

But he wasn't there, and there was no saying when he would be. He must have known that Arlos was caught in the cloud-burst, with the chances vastly against his deliverance therefrom, and he would hunt for him.

Failing to find any trace of the youth where the waters expanded and lost their force in the valley, he would ascend the gorge in further prosecution of his search.

Stepping back a few paces to look at the torrent, Arlos was astounded. It had spent its force almost as rapidly as it had come into existence. Along the bottom of the gorge twisted a muddy stream,

with here and there pools in the hollows that had been filled by the deluge.

Arlos was curious enough to study the face of the wall up which he had climbed, and which was now visible all the way to the bottom.

"I never could have done it," he said with a shudder, as he saw that the wall for nearly the entire distance beneath where he had stood was without ledge or indentation. "Ra-lo-no was the friend in need; I would have had to throw away my gun before I could climb to this place."

But it would not do to spend the day standing at the side of the gorge, going through the farce of trying to talk with one who could not understand a syllable of what was said.

"I thought I saw Budd peering over the bank when I was spinning along, but it must have been a fancy of mine. I wonder whether it can be that he was in danger and really needed my help! If he did, the time for it is past."

The thought was a distretsing one, and Arlos acted at once upon the suggestion it brought to him. A little survey of the surroundings showed that he had climbed out of the gorge at a point hardly a hundred yards from where it opened into the valley.

The discovery suggested that if he had continued

to go with the torrent instead of nearly wrenching his arm off in the effort to check his progress, he would have been safe in a very brief time.

“Still there was the chance that I might have had my head cracked against the rocks; and then, too, I wouldn’t have had the pleasure of making the acquaintance of Ra-lo-no. I wonder how the mischief he happened to be down there on the ledge when I made a grab for it.”

It was a curious circumstance! The only explanation that suggested itself to Arlos was that, from his position at the top of the ravine, the Indian had seen the white youth engulfed, and had hastily descended the wall with the purpose of making a desperate effort to save him.

Having obtained his bearings, Arlos fixed in his mind the point whence came the report of Budd Slogan’s rifle, and started to hunt for him.

He had no wish to part company with Ra-lo-no, and invited him by gesture to accompany him. Ra-lo-no grinned a little more and complied, falling behind, as if in compliment to the Caucasian youth.

“I wonder what he means by that,” muttered Arlos, with a qualm of misgiving. “I don’t think these people are well up in the laws of etiquette among us, but it looks as if he resigned the lead out of compliment to me. It gives him a good

chance to jab his knife in my back, for I observe he has one under his blanket, not to mention that little implement of mine, which is as sharp as a razor."

A moment's reflection, however, drove the ugly suspicion from the youth's mind. Surely if Ra-lo-no intended evil, he would have carried out his purpose when Arlos was below him in the gorge and the opportunity was the best he could ever have.

Nevertheless, the New Yorker motioned for his companion to take his place at his side, and he did so without hesitation.

"He's a powerful fellow," said the white youth, admiringly surveying the shoulders and limbs of the other. "He can climb like a monkey, and I've no doubt can run as fast—well, as I—maybe," he added, smiling at his own joke, which had to be lost upon his companion.

"The ground over which they picked their way was much broken. It showed hardly a sign of vegetation, which was so plentiful in the valley below. It was up and down, crossed by deep fissures, and so broad in many places that it took quite a leap to carry one to the other side.

When it was necessary—as was often the case—for the two to travel in Indian file, Ra-lo-no led, a fact which caused Arlos no little self-reproach.

"I wonder whether he has any suspicion of the

thoughts that were in my mind; if I believed he had, I would be filled with mortification."

It need hardly be said that by this time all mis-giving on the part of Arlos Hayman had vanished. He would not have hesitated to trust his companion to any extent.

He admired the youth as he leaped sometimes over a boulder or across a fissure with the easy grace of a trained athlete.

All at once, Ra-lo-no, who was slightly in front, paused and held up his hand with a subdued exclamation.

He had discovered something the nature of which he did not understand, but meant to learn.

CHAPTER XI.

INTERESTING NEWS.

RA-LA-NO had halted in front of a mass of rocks and boulders piled to a height of fully a hundred feet and covering an area of half an acre. They were totally bare of vegetation around their bases, and would have formed an impregnable refuge for a small force against ten times its number.

At the moment of stopping the young Indian was slightly in advance of Arlos, so that a couple of steps placed the latter beside his dusky guide. What it was that had caught his attention Arlos could not guess, for he neither saw nor heard any sign of life; but he knew the marvelous keenness of the American race, that reads signs invisible to another as readily as a white man interprets the meaning of the printed page.

That Ra-lo-no had observed something suspicious was beyond question.

Arlos suspected that it was some kind of game, for he reasoned that a white man was not likely to be an enemy of himself, while, if the stranger was

an Indian, he would be well disposed toward the dusky guide.

The stationary, listening attitudes of the two had lasted hardly a minute, when Ra-lo-no pointed to a break in the rocks about a dozen feet above the ground. At the same time he uttered an expression which probably meant "Look!" and Arlos obeyed.

At first he could discover nothing to warrant the emotion of his companion, but a closer scrutiny revealed something projecting from over the top of a flat rock, which looked like a short, dark-colored branch or limb, shorn of its twigs, but which was quickly revealed as the barrel of a rifle.

The weapon was not pointed toward them, but was in that position that it could be instantly turned to any point of the compass by the man behind it, the top of whose slouch hat was disclosed against the boulders back of him.

There seemed to be something familiar in the headgear, though no portion of the individual's head showed. Nevertheless, it was evident that he was aware of the approach of the two youths, and was ready for any demonstration by them.

The hat, as partly shown, was of the same color as the background of dark rock, which explains why Arlos Hayman failed at first to notice it.

Knowing that it was a white man who thus commanded the situation, he called :

“Hello, there! we are friends! Don’t be afraid to show yourself.”

“Who’s afeard of two younkers like you?”

As the question was asked the man rose to an erect position, revealing the shoulders and head of the grinning Budd Slogan, who stepped out of the pocket and approached the youths. His whole interest seemed to be in Ra-lo-no, and he watched him closely until directly in front of the two. Then, without noticing his young friend, he addressed an inquiry to the Indian in his native tongue.

The dusky face lighted up and the youth exhibited one of his tremendous grins as he answered the query, and made a remark or two of his own. Then the conversation continued for a brief while without the least attention being shown to the wondering third party, who could only conjecture what it all meant.

Although Budd Slogan could make himself understood in the lingo of the Indian youth, his speech was so halt that he had to assist it by means of signs which were so numerous and curious that they were incomprehensible to Arlos Hayman.

Suddenly Budd extended his hand to the latter.

"You've been taking a swim, hain't you?"

"I suspect I have; I couldn't very well help it. I heard your gun fired three times as we agreed should be the urgency signal."

"You knowed what it meant; why didn't you do some tall traveling?"

"I did; but I had no suspicion that it was a warning for me to get out of the gorge as soon as I could."

"How else could you come to me without climbing out, being likewise the same that I wasn't in it? As soon as I seen the cloud burst I knowed what was comin' and called for you."

"Then you were in no need of my help?"

"Not much; I started to hunt you up, but couldn't get to the gorge in time. Howsumever, I seen you after this redskin had helped pull you out. I knowed, too, that you would set out to hunt for me, so I slipped back and hid just to larn what sort of a scout you would make. Younker, you're a dead failure."

"I do not doubt it; but what of my companion, Ra-lo-no?"

"How d' you know his name?"

"He told me."

"He can't talk English."

"I know that, but he can pronounce his own name, which I take it isn't English."

“You’ve got it right, and he seems to have yours.”

“What tribe does he belong to?”

“The Shoshones; their reservation is to the north of the Union Pacific Railroad, to the east of the Wind River Mountains, south of the Owl Creek range, and west of the Big Horn and Rattlesnake Mountains. It’s about as fur north of the railroad as we’re south of it, and between the reservation and the railroad is the Sweetwater range; so you see this youngster has come a good way.”

“But I thought the Indians were not allowed to go off their reservations?”

“It’s agin rules, but they do it all the time. Sometimes they get permission to leave for a little while, but it isn’t hard for a dozen of ’em to come the grand sneak, which I reckon is what has been done this time, though Ra-lo-no says the officers give him and the rest permission to hunt down in Middle Park, which the same I don’t b’lieve, for they kin get plenty of hunting without coming half as fur as this.”

“What do you think is the real reason?”

“It’s hard to tell, but an Injin is the same as you and me; he likes to do that which he is told he mustn’t do. They’re fond of roaming round the country; sometimes they’ll go hundreds of miles

from home, just for the fun of the thing. I once met three Crows in New Mexico, where they was more than a thousand miles from home, and Kit Carson told me he had seen some of these Shoshones in Southern Californy, where they don't b'long any more than they do in Afriky. Injins is queer critters, and there's only one thing about 'em that you can be sartin of, and that is that they'll bite every time they get a chance and think it's safe."

"Ra-lo-no certainly did not bite when he had every chance in the world. I let him take my rifle, and he could have tumbled me back into the gorge when I was climbing up, with hardly any effort on his part."

Budd shrugged his shoulders.

"He's got other idees in his mind. You'll find him out afore you're many years older, but we kin afford to let that go fur the time."

While the two were talking the young Shoshone glanced from one countenance to the other, as if he was trying to interpret the words by the motion of their lips. Hearing his own name pronounced, he must have known that he was the subject of a part at least of their conversation, though everything that was uttered was beyond his comprehension.

"Younker," said Budd, in his abrupt manner,

"we ain't the only ones that is hunting in this part of the country."

"That is what I have supposed from the first. We know that my friend Dolph Bushkirk and your acquaintance, Varnum Brown, are somewhere in the neighborhood. Then, I understand, there is a party of Shoshones, and what more likely than that other white men are looking for game, though it is rather late in the season for them."

"I'm afeard there's some characters that it won't be best for us to meet, and when I say that I don't mean Injins."

This was the first time the guide had declared in unmistakable language that he knew of people of their own race not far off who were dangerous.

While separated from Arlos and pushing his hunt alone, he had made several discoveries which were anything but pleasant. He did not give particulars, but told his young friend that when abroad he must take special pains to look out for white men and to avoid them under all circumstances, unless they were his old friends whom he was eager to meet.

Budd now resumed his conversation with the young Shoshone, while Arlos became the amused listener. Both talked fast, frequently at the same moment, and gesticulated energetically. Now and then one of them showed by his looks and manner

that he failed to catch the meaning of the other, but on the whole they got along well.

The result was that Budd Slogan acquired much interesting information which he imparted to Arles Hayman.

Ra-lo-no had come with more than a dozen of his people from the Wind River reservation, for what might be termed a rambling hunt. His father was a medicine man, and both he and the sister of Ra-lo-no were members of the party.

The Shoshones had been peaceful for a long time, and had given so little trouble that they readily obtained permission to be absent a month, half of which time had already expired.

Reflection convinced Budd that this story was true. The guide had come upon indications of the presence of a hunting party of Indians in the neighborhood, who were undoubtedly those to whom the youth belonged.

An odd feature of the excursion was that when Ra-lo-no left home he brought with him neither gun nor bow and arrows, his only weapon being a fine hunting knife. He generally carried a short, heavy stick, which could be of little service, but it would seem that he ought to have had no trouble in securing something effective with which to defend himself or hunt.

It was possible that the fact of his father being a famous medicine man had something to do with this singular deprivation, though Budd could not explain how it was.

Another theory was that Ra-lo-no had offended his parent, who took this means of showing his displeasure.

But Budd gathered from the Shoshone some interesting news. He had withdrawn from the main party early that morning. He did not explain why he did so, but said they were no more than two miles away on the western side of a ridge which he pointed out.

There were a number of white men also hunting through the mountains. They were ugly characters, who had exchanged shots with the Shoshones. They showed their evil nature by opening fire after the Indians had made signs of friendship. They slightly wounded one of the warriors, who returned the shots so briskly that the outlaws drew off.

"Them's the ones we must look out fur," he said, compressing his lips and shaking his head; "it's a toss up if they ain't hoss thieves, train robbers, or burglars, that are up here to keep out of the way of officers. They look on every one as their enemies, and would fire on us as quick as they did on them Shoshones."

But that which interested Arlos before everything else was a statement of Ra-lo-no, which made it certain he had met Dolph Bushkirk and his guide, Varnum Brown. He had seen them two days previous beside a small stream five or six miles to the north. Ra-lo-no and his sister Ko-mo-mo had accepted the invitation of the white people to share dinner with them, so it was plain they were on good terms.

The description which Ra-lo-no gave of the hunter left no doubt in the mind of Budd that he was his old acquaintance, Varnum Brown, and since Arlos was equally positive as to Dolph Bushkirk, the identity of the two was considered as having been established.

This being the fact, Arlos was eager to push the search without delay. "We ought to find them without trouble, for they can't be very far off," he said. "Then, too, Budd, we shall be much stronger when there are four of us instead of two."

"Yes," replied the guide, showing less interest in the matter than the youth expected; "I'd like to see Varn Brown, and though I don't know the youngster you're talking about, I will like him 'cause he's a friend of your'n."

"You can't help it; he's a splendid fellow; a good deal more of a companion than I,"

"He'll do, if he ain't any better," remarked the guide with a smile.

To the surprise of Arlos, Budd decided that while the two youths should make search for the others he would not join them.

"I won't be fur off, and if you want me, you know how to call me; we haven't got any game yet, and it will soon be noon."

"I ate so large a breakfast that I think I can stand it until the afternoon is well along. In fact, it strikes me that two meals a day are better than three, though you needn't think I am losing my appetite, for I could eat four or five and enjoy them all."

Having made his decision, the guide, as was his custom, acted upon it without waste of time.

A little further talk with Ra-lo no made everything clear to him. The Indian understood that the young man and boy whom he had met two days before were friends of these, whom they wished to find, and he cheerfully agreed to do what he could to bring the parties together. Then Budd strode off, passing around the huge pile of bowlders and disappearing from sight.

"What a pity you and I can't understand each other?" said Arlos, looking with a smile at the young Shoshone, who answered with his all-em-

bracing grin. "I can speak a little French and German, but of course you haven't got that far in your studies. Now, Ra-lo-no, we are to hunt a couple of men instead of wild animals."

The action of the Shoshone would have indicated that the words were fully understood, but he was only following instructions received a few minutes before from Budd Slogan. He continued to grin, as a matter of course, and, nodding his head, accompanied by a gesture of his hands, set out in the direction of the broad valley, where Arlos and his guide had established their headquarters the day before.

The youth was relieved to know that he was not likely to suffer from his involuntary bath in the gorge. His clothing was nearly dry, and Ra-lo-no's heavy blanket kept his body in a comfortable glow. At such times a healthy person has only to maintain his natural temperature by exercise, to parry any cold or chill.

It was only a brief walk to the edge of the valley, where they paused for a minute and surveyed the scene spread before them.

Far less traces of the spasmodic deluge were in sight than would be thought. The vast volume of water, after squeezing through the gorge, had widened out and overflowed the valley over a space

of many acres. The slope, however, quickly carried it to the lowest point, where, it will be remembered, a small stream wound its way.

This served as an outlet, and so rapidly had the water been carried off that the only signs were the bits of driftwood strewn here and there along the slope, and the roiled and slightly increased volume of the stream, which was fast clearing itself.

Arlos saw nothing of the ponies, but this caused him no concern. It had been decided to leave them to themselves, and he did not intend to make any hunt for animals until the time arrived to start homeward.

Pausing but a brief while on the bank, Ra-lo-no led the way down the slope and turned to the right. This was up the valley and away from the rocks where Arlos and Budd had established their rendezvous, or headquarters.

The vigor and promptness with which the young Shoshone advanced looked as if he had a definite point in mind, where he expected to find the other white hunters, but such was not the fact. He was following a theory rather than any special, clearly defined plan.

CHAPTER XII.

A "BAD MAN."

RA-LO-NO's action was that of a person who was familiar with every square rood of the country, and yet, until his late visit to Middle Park, he had never set foot within its precincts.

He belonged to a race who have lived for centuries in solitudes and the wildest fastnesses. While he was as sure-footed as an Alpine climber, he stepped as lightly as a fawn, his little black eyes glancing to the right and left, and not failing to note the most insignificant signs. Young as was this Indian, he was a consummate trailer and woodman.

"It's a pity he hasn't a rifle," reflected Arlos, who could hardly keep his admiring eyes from him. "I wish I had brought an extra gun with me, so as to present it to him. If the thing can be managed I shall do it."

The tramp continued for a mile without incident. The character of the valley underwent no perceptible change.

At the end of the mile it grew more broken. The stream, which had been flowing over so slight an incline as to cause only a few ripples, tumbled down a ledge of rocks twenty feet in height, breaking into foam at the bottom and sending up a volume of spray, through which the colors of the rainbow were observed when the sun's rays struck it.

The two paused for a minute to view the pleasing waterfall, but the Shoshone had seen too many, a hundredfold more striking, to be detained by such a trifle. With an exclamation he turned to the right, so as to flank the falls, and pushed on.

They had gone but a few rods when he stopped so suddenly that Arlos, who was but a couple of paces behind him, was startled.

But he perceived the cause. A graceful antelope, probably on its way to the stream for drink, had come face to face with them, and paused, so frightened that for the instant it was transfixed. It was perhaps fifty yards off, where the ground was several feet higher, and formed a pretty picture with its graceful head in air, and its gentle, inquiring eyes fixed upon the dreaded strangers.

But it was only for an instant. Its instinct warned it of its peril, and it whirled like a flash and dashed off with the speed of the wind.

Quickly as this was done Ra-lo-no anticipated it by extending his hand toward the Winchester of Arlos, who was about to bring it to his shoulder; but reading the wish of the young Shoshone, he passed the weapon to him. In a twinkling it was at his shoulder and leveled at the fleeing antelope, who was so astonishingly quick in his movements that he had already considerably increased the distance between him and his enemies.

It seemed that the gun was hardly at a horizontal when the Shoshone pressed the trigger. The animal made a wild bound in air, and falling to the earth hardly moved.

He had been killed as suddenly as if shot through the heart. The exploit of Ra-lo-no could not have been surpassed by any professional. It was perfect.

He handed back the weapon to Arlos and started on a loping trot toward his prize. The delighted owner of the piece was at his heels, and as they reached the spot where the lifeless antelope lay, Arlos slapped the Shoshone on the shoulder.

"Splendid! capital! I couldn't have beaten that myself!" he exclaimed.

Ra-lo-no must have known these were enthusiastic comments, and it is not unlikely that he was pleased with what he had done.

“Wherever you learned to shoot, you had a good teacher; if there’s any possible way of getting you a weapon you shall have the best that money can purchase, Ra-lo-no. You’re what might be called a dandy.”

But if the youth was really proud of his exploit he showed no evidence of it. The poetry of his nature gave way to the practical fact that the means for a substantial and toothsome meal was before him. He drew his hunting knife, with the intention of extracting the choicest portions for himself and friend.

The Shoshone was leaning over, with his eye upon the spot where he meant to insert the point of his knife, when he and Arlos were startled by a gruff voice: “Hey, thar! drap that!”

Looking up, they saw a white man striding toward them. He had been concealed behind one of the numerous boulders, which seemed to be on every hand, and was only a few rods distant.

He was dressed similarly to Budd Slogan, but his face was of a most forbidding appearance. His scraggy black whiskers grew almost to his eyes, which were black, large, and protruding. His hair, of the same color, dangled over his forehead, so that he suggested a wild animal glaring through a thicket.

He was stoop-shouldered, held a rifle in his right hand, a belt of cartridges spanned his burly waist, and the handles of a revolver and knife were in sight. There could be no question that this desperado was "well heeled."

His voice befitted him, for it was husky and rasping. Arlos set him down at once as a typical "bad man," several specimens of which he had seen in Denver, and after leaving that city; but since the fellow was alone it cannot be said that the youth felt any fear of him. He felt resentful that the stranger should have addressed the harsh words to Ra-lo-no, who had given no cause for offense.

Holding his Winchester ready for use, and making sure his pistol was within immediate reach, Arlos looked the man in the eye as he came up, and asked:

"What do you mean by telling us to drop that?"

"I mean jes' what I said, tenderfoot; you heerd me, didn't you?"

"Of course we did; but does this game belong to you?"

"In course it does; it's mine!" replied the fellow, halting within a couple of paces of the youth, and glaring savagely at him.

Ra-lo-no had straightened up, and with his knife

in hand, recoiled a step, but kept his eyes upon the intruder. Though he did not understand the words spoken, he could not fail to suspect their meaning.

"What claim have you to the antelope?" demanded Arlos.

"'Cause I shot him; ain't that 'nough?"

"You didn't shoot him; he was killed by my friend with my rifle."

The fellow emitted a fierce expletive and turned his gaze upon the young Shoshone, who, standing proudly erect, confronted him without flinching.

"You're one of them varmints we had a row with t'other day; you pinked Bill Spriggens, and we're goin' to squar' 'counts with you for it. I take only one chaw at kids like you."

"He can't understand a word of what you say, and if he did he wouldn't be scared by such stuff as that," retorted Arlos, who, shifting his rifle to his left hand, rested his right upon the butt of the revolver at his hip.

"He'll understand what I'm drivin' at afore I'm through with him," growled the ill-favored stranger, who suddenly ducked his head, made a horrible grimace, and emitting a noise like the bark of a cur, leaped toward the Shoshone, thrusting his head almost into his face.

It was a bluff which he expected would frighten

the young Indian out of his wits, and send him scurrying for life. It not only failed, however, to do that, but resulted in a scare to the man that fairly made his teeth chatter.

Ra-lo-no did not recoil, but struck full at the visage with his knife, the point of the blade actually scratching the bulging nose. No doubt had he chosen he could have given the fellow a desperate wound, but what he did served for the moment as well; it sent the man backward with a shudder of terror.

“Better let him alone,” said Arlos, with a laugh; “he’s dangerous, and if you make him mad will carve you up before you can say ‘Jack Robinson.’”

“Carve me up!” roared the man, with another imprecation; “I’m going to cut off your ears, and then chaw both of you up.”

“Suppose you start in with him and then tackle me, or, if you prefer, you can make a beginning with me.”

The desperado turned his fierce glance upon the youth. If fiendish scowls could have smitten a person, Arlos Hayman would have succumbed, but he did not loosen his grasp upon his small weapon.

“Do you know,” said the stranger, “that I’m a ba-a-d man?”

“I don’t doubt that you are a scoundrel and cow-



Arlos flashed out his pistol and leveled it at the stranger.—Page 145.



ard; your looks show that. Neither of us is afraid of you, and if you think we are why don't you begin business?"

Something just then trickled from the point of the huge nose. The fellow put up his hand and saw that it was blood, the effects of the slight wound from Ra-lo-no's knife.

The discovery seemed to fill him to overflowing with fury. He snatched his revolver from its sheath.

"The chap that gives me a hurt, even if it's no more than a scratch, has got to pass in his checks; redskin, say your prayers!"

As firm, defiant, and resolute as a marble statue the young Shoshone confronted the wretch, his only weapon firmly clasped in hand, and his broad, honest face without a trace of fear, though he must have known that his life hung by a thread.

But before the man could bring his weapon to bear, Arlos Hayman had flashed out his own and leveled it at him.

"The moment you sight that pistol, I fire!"

The fellow turned his face and saw the revolver of the youth pointed straight at his head. In other words, Arlos "had the drop on him," and the scoundrel knew it.

This put a different face on matters. When a

man, with ordinary sense knows that a hostile movement on his part means certain death, he is not likely to make the movement. A postponement is in order.

“Things ain’t jes’ exactly as I thort,” he growled with a leer. “I’ll leave this quarrel to be settled later; younker, don’t forgit that it’s atween you and me, with the redskin throwed in to make good weight.”

“I won’t forget it; and now if you don’t take yourself off, I’ll shoot, anyway!”

“My name is Val Harper; I’ll see you agin. Meanwhile, I’ll take this meat along.”

“Lay your hand on that antelope and I’ll blow your brains out!”

The only recourse the “bad man” possessed was his tongue, which gave out a number of sulphurous expletives. But the wretch saw he was “caught foul,” as he expressed it.

He glared first at one and then at the other, as if looking for a chance to turn the tables, but there was none. He wheeled about and slouched off toward the point whence he came.

The moment he stirred Ra-lo-no made a quick step to the side of Arlos and caught up his Winchester. In a flash it was pointed at the back of the desperado.

Arlos thought he meant to shoot, and he was so angry with the wretch that he offered no protest, though he dreaded to see a man struck down in such fashion.

But the Shoshone merely meant to hold him covered, against contingencies. It was well he did so, for Val Harper had not taken twenty steps when he whirled like lightning, and brought his rifle to his shoulder. Had he caught the youths off their guard, he would have shot both.

But he saw the hated redskin with the weapon leveled. He had only to press the trigger to bore the other through with the bullet. Once more the "drop" was on him, and with a muttered oath he faced the other way and resumed his slouchy retreat.

Ra-lo-no held his position, and his old smile came back to his broad face. He must have been strongly tempted to fire, and it was greatly to his credit that he did not, when he knew he was sparing the life of a man who would have shot him down as quickly as if he were a wild beast, had the chance presented itself.

A second time the desperado looked back, but his glance was only a partial one, and he did not seek to use his gun, for he saw that which he expected, and knew well what the result of such action would be to himself.

That the American Indian sometimes possesses a vein of waggishness was proved by the young Shoshone, who, at the moment that the "bad man" had reached a point a considerable distance off and was about to disappear from sight, let fly with Arlos Hayman's Winchester.

But he did not shoot to kill. He sent the bullet into the calf of the "bad man's" leg, producing a sharp sting, but only a trifling wound. Val Harper emitted a yell which could have been heard a mile, and leaping into the air, broke into a frantic run, which quickly carried him beyond sight.

Several things astonished Arlos Hayman. The moment the Shoshone fired he slid another cartridge into the cylinder, doing it with a facility which proved he was accustomed to handling the improved weapon. Then, when the terrified desperado broke into a run, Ra-lo-no lowered his gun and bent double with laughter, which rang out as loudly as it ever came from the throat of a civilized human being.

His mirth was so contagious that Arlos could not restrain himself, but sitting on the ground was shaken from head to foot.

Had Val Harper turned at that moment he could not have asked a better opportunity to balance matters; but he had not yet got over his panic,

and probably kept up his flight for some minutes longer. Sometimes a man makes a serious blunder. Val Harper had done something of that nature when he bore down on the two youths.

Now that the incident had passed Arlos felt something in the nature of reaction. He recalled the warning of Budd Slogan, and knew that the man whom they had encountered was one of the party that was to be avoided.

Arlos would have kept out of his way had it been practicable, but, as will be recalled, the other was upon them before they had any thought of his presence. The meeting had been unavoidable, and the youth hoped that that was the last of him, though the feeling was strong that more serious trouble was yet to come.

But Ra-lo-no took everything with a coolness and indifference not surpassed by any veteran of his race. Having recovered from his spasm of merriment, he cut a couple of goodly slices from the carcass of the antelope, and then signified to his friend that they would prepare their dinner somewhere else.

Arlos commended this precaution, for he was convinced that the baffled desperado would make a stealthy return to the spot in the hope of gaining a shot at one or both.

The Shoshone turned down the valley, walking briskly until some distance beyond the waterfall. Then he made another turn, finally halting in a place where the rocks screened them from observation.

Here, too, was considerable driftwood scattered about, and laying the meat on the flat surface of the stone, he busied himself in gathering fuel, in which task Arlos gave assistance.

When sufficient had been collected the latter held back to see what means his friend had for starting the blaze. To his astonishment the Indian brought out a rubber safe from his pocket, from which he took a match, drew it along the rough bottom, and in a twinkling had the fire under headway.

"This young man is civilized," Arlos concluded; "he wears much the same clothing as I, and perhaps in his home possesses the same conveniences. I didn't know they managed things so well on the reservations."

He left the preparation of the meat to Ra-lo-no, and Budd Slogan himself could not have done it more skillfully. The Shoshone waited until sufficient coals were formed, when he raked them out and dropped the meat upon them. Others might have preferred to skewer them with green twigs and hold them in front of the blaze, but the other

was the quickest way, despite the risk of ashes and dirt.

The last mouthful was hardly swallowed when Ra-lo-no uttered an exclamation and pointed toward the higher ground beyond the falls, where the antelope had been shot. There in plain sight was Val Harper, his body in a stooping posture, while he glared from right to left underneath his sombrero as he stealthily advanced, his whole manner showing that his intention was to close up the unsettled account between him and the two youths who had used him so ill.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CAMP OF THE ENEMY.

SINCE Val Harper was in plain view he was sure to see the boys who were watching his actions. Indeed, the smoke of their fire would have revealed them before had he gazed in that direction, but evidently he expected to find them near the spot where he had had his disappointing meeting.

When he learned they were not there he straightened up and looked around.

Instead of stooping or trying to hide themselves, both Arlos and Ra-lo-no also stood up, so that he would be sure to see them. Not only that, but the former took off his hat and made a mock salutation to the "bad man."

The latter stared at them, as if unable to do justice to his feelings. What he said can never be known, because he was too far off for his words to be heard, but having satisfied himself that his eyes did not deceive him, he once more turned and passed from sight.

And again the young Shoshone bent over and

gave vent to his merriment. The whole thing was an irresistible comedy to him. Arlos also laughed, but he could not feel quite so mirthful.

He knew they had made a mortal enemy, who would neglect no means of revenging himself upon them; and since both youths expected to spend an indefinite period in the neighborhood, it was more than likely that the comedy sooner or later would be turned into a tragedy.

It was past noon, as a glance at his watch showed. When Arlos took out the timepiece the Shoshone looked at it so curiously that the owner unfastened the chain and handed it to him.

The Indian took it rather gingerly, looked at the face, grinned at the second hand jogging round the smaller circle, held the case to his ear, and then studied the hour and minute hand with the gravest of countenances.

"I wonder whether he has any idea of its use," was the thought of Arlos; "or he may be astonished that it kept going while in the water."

The hands showed that it was nearly one o'clock in the afternoon. Suddenly Ra-lo-no looked at the sun, which of course had passed meridian, and then down again at the watch. This was done several times, after which he grinned in his usual overwhelming fashion.

He pointed at the sun, then at the timepiece, nodded his head half a dozen times, and placed the point of his finger on the crystal.

“ Yes, he knows all about it! I don’t doubt that if he understood English he could tell the exact minute by the watch, though his people don’t need timepieces when the sun shines.”

Having satisfied himself Ra-lo-no handed back the watch with an inclination of his head and several words uttered in his low, musical voice, which were doubtless meant for thanks.

The next action of the dusky youth showed he intended to part company with Arlos, who was as much surprised as disappointed, for he had expected to have his help in hunting Dolph Bushkirk.

His gestures and words were profuse. He pointed to the north and made as if to start in that direction. When Arlos arose to go with him he stopped and motioned him to remain. They were to separate: of that there was no question.

Convinced of this, Arlos took the blanket from his shoulders and handed it to his companion, who shook his head to signify he did not wish it. Arlos insisted, intimating as well as he could that he was the owner of a similar garment, and now that his clothing was dry he had no use for it.

Then Ra-lo-no brought out the pocket-knife and

tendered it to his friend, who declined to take it. The implement was a gift, the blanket a loan.

The Shoshone spent several minutes arguing as best he could, but Arlos was inflexible. Finally the Shoshone replaced the knife in his pocket, slung the blanket about his body so that it inclosed one shoulder, and turned to leave.

As he did so he offered his hand to his paleface friend, pointed to the sky, and seemed to be trying to say that he would soon meet him again. At least that was what Arlos believed was his meaning, and subsequent events confirmed this belief.

Then the dusky fellow strode off down the valley. Arlos gazed after him until he entered the gorge which had been the scene of the cloudburst, and disappeared from sight, never having once looked back at the one who was watching him with so much interest.

“It must be that he leaves because of some order from his parent or some person in authority. I believe the Indians are very strict in exacting obedience from their children, and Ra-lo-no is more afraid of offending his father than he is of a dozen Val Harpers. He has gone to keep his promise, but I am much mistaken if I do not meet him before many days. I shall hope so, for he is a very inter-

esting fellow, and I shall always be grateful for what he has done for me.

“I wonder if when he was looking at my watch he wasn’t trying to tell me that the time had come when he must go elsewhere.”

Left to himself, Arlos had to decide upon his own course of action. He had no idea where Budd Slogan was, and he was not likely to see him before nightfall, when, if all went well, they would meet at the boulders down the valley.

Inasmuch as a goodly number of hours of daylight remained, he was eager to turn them to account by pressing his search for Dolph Bushkirk.

But whither should he direct his footsteps? His impression was that he was somewhere to the northward, and yet his friend in all probability had changed his position, and a hunt might be pushed for weeks without success.

Standing thus, trying to solve the perplexing problem, Arlos looked to the towering mountains, whose summits were in the direction of the setting sun. The crests were mantled with snow, and here and there along the sides below stunted trees were growing, but he discerned no grove as dense as that in which he had met the grizzly bear the preceding day.

From a clump of pines, however, he observed a

column of smoke, which recalled that which so interested Budd Slogan when they were entering this section.

Arlos drew out his glass and leveled it in the direction of the vapor, but the instrument gave him little help. The smoke showed more distinctly, but if there were men gathered about the camp-fire he could not detect the first evidence that such was the case.

There was enough vegetation to hide them from sight, but in the hope that some member of the party would disclose himself, Arlos kept the spot under surveillance for fifteen or twenty minutes, without, however, any success.

“Now can it be that Dolph Bushkirk and Varnum Brown have started that fire; and if they did, are they in the neighborhood?” he reasoned. “Isn’t it more likely that some of Val Harper’s party are there? If so, I don’t want to get any nearer.

The campfire was fully a mile away, and so far up the mountain that it required a long and laborious climb to reach it. That, however, was no obstacle to the youth, who welcomed that sort of exertion; but he could not forget the warning of the guide concerning the desperate gang in the neighborhood. If Arlos should pass into their lines, as it may be expressed, he could hardly escape dis-

covery, in which event serious consequences were certain to ensue.

He was inclined to fire his gun as a recall to Budd, who, it is fair to presume, would not have left him had he known that the young Shoshone would do the same before completing the search for the other couple.

But a natural reluctance prevented Arlos carrying out his first intention. He reasoned that Budd must have had a good cause for his action, and to turn him aside from it was likely to interfere with important plans.

"I'll take the chances," he said, after a little further thought; "there is some one among those trees—that's certain."

This conclusion was caused by a change in the appearance of the smoke ascending from the camp-fire. When it first caught his eye it was thin and whitish in color. But it was now darker and denser, indicating that additional fuel had been thrown on the blaze.

There was the possibility that it was a signal to some other party, though if such was the fact a much greater change in the smoke would be shown. It would have been wavy and broken, such variations being easily made by the Indians when signaling to distant friends.

Having decided to learn all about the camp on the mountain side, Arlos set out to do so. The knowledge that enemies were in the section, and that he was likely to run across them any moment, made him unusually circumspect.

He took advantage of all the cover and protection possible while stealing forward. The numerous rocks and boulders gave great help, but he often reflected in passing between many of the piles and through narrow passages, that he was completely at the mercy of any foe who used one-half the care that he did.

When the greater part of the distance was passed he heard the report of a rifle, followed a few moments later by another, and then by a couple more.

All came from a point so far to the left that none of the guns could have been fired in the grove which was his destination.

The first report caused him to stop and listen, under the impression that it might have been made by Budd Slogan's Winchester; but, if such was the fact, it was not a signal, and Arlos did not feel called upon to investigate.

He had started to solve the mystery of the camp, whose smoke was in full view, filtering among the treetops. It was not so dark and thick as a brief

while before, a fact which confirmed his belief that it had not been meant for a signal.

So guarded were the movements of the youth that the afternoon was half gone when he reached the edge of the grove which possessed so much interest for him. He observed that the pines not only grew close together, but the broken ground was choked with undergrowth, which shut out all view of the fire.

He could not be too careful in picking his way through the natural obstruction, for the least slip would warn the men, if they were Indians, who never lose their alertness and vigilance. If the strangers were members of Val Harper's party, as Arlos believed, they would be hardly less watchful, since they must be aware that they had made enemies of the Shoshones.

Rifle in hand, the youth advanced step by step, parting the undergrowth, peering from behind each tree as he reached it, and scrutinizing the ground immediately in front before resting his feet upon it.

He was near enough to catch the glow of the blaze upon the limbs above and to hear the murmur of voices, when he was startled by the sound of some one behind him. A person was approaching the camp, but with a haste and carelessness which proved he was a friend to those in front.

Without pausing to look back, Arlos crouched to the ground and slipped around the base of a pine, so as to interpose it between himself and the newcomer.

The youth was not a moment too soon in doing this. The rustling of the undergrowth came nearer and almost immediately the figure of a person appeared, striding impatiently forward. The furtive glimpse which Arlos caught of him revealed Val Harper, the "bad man."

It seemed certain that he would discover the crouching figure of the youth, since his course led him within a couple of yards of where the latter was seeking to hide himself without the ability to do so, for the trunk of the pine was not large enough to screen one-half of his body.

Believing detection inevitable, Arlos placed his hand on his revolver, determined to show a defiant front, even though the chances were a hundredfold against him.

But Val Harper's attention was wholly centered upon the camp a little beyond. He was impatient, taking angry strides, with his eyes set to the front and not looking to the right or left. A few seconds carried him so far that Arlos, peeping from behind the pine, saw only his back. Twenty yards further and the man arrived at the camp.

Now that he had ascertained the state of things, prudence suggested to the eavesdropper to withdraw, without risking himself further. Neither Dolph Bushkirk nor Varnum Brown was in the grove, nor were any of the Shoshones there; the party must be all or a portion of those against whom Budd Slogan had warned his young friend.

Arlos held several minutes' debate with himself. It may have been that he possessed a little more than his share of curiosity, for he decided to secure a fuller view of the company before withdrawing from the grove. Advancing, therefore, with the same care he had shown from the first, he finally reached a point which gave him the coveted sight.

Four of the most villainous-looking men were seated around a small fire, all smoking, for Val Harper had no sooner come up than he lit his pipe and took his seat among them.

Their appearance and manner showed they were discussing some subject of deep interest to all. They made numerous gestures, shook their heads, and two of them rose to their feet, as if to gain more freedom for swinging their arms.

Their rifles rested against the trees near them, and from the appearance of the camp the three had evidently eaten their midday meal on the spot. Probably they were out for game when Val Harper

undertook to confiscate the antelope shot by the young Shoshone.

It was proof that the wound caused by Ra-lo-no's shot was little more than a scratch, for the desperado showed not the least effects from it. He walked with his usual step, and the leg had not been bandaged or doctored in any way.

Arlos, however, could not forbear a smile when the position of the fellow allowed the firelight to fall fairly upon his countenance, and he observed the swelling of the large nose that had been pricked by the hunting knife of the young Shoshone. The scamp had received a memento of that meeting which he was certain to carry for several days.

It occurred to Arlos that if he could get a little nearer he might overhear the conversation of the men, who were talking in careless tones. Their words were certain to be of importance to him and Budd, and he cautiously advanced several steps.

Then his sense and discretion warned him it would not do to go any further. He was certain to be discovered, and could expect no consideration at the hands of the four, one of whom had already proven his treacherous disposition.

It was exasperating to the young hunter that he should be thus baffled when on the threshold of success. He was actually near enough to hear

himself referred to by Val Harper, who at the moment was standing before his comrades, swinging his arms and hurling expletives right and left; but it was to the credit of the youth that he held back, without being able to catch a connected sentence or gain any idea of what the man was saying.

Not only did Arlos check his advance, but he carefully retreated until in a position where he was sure of not being seen, except through some unexpected occurrence.

Whatever the theme of dispute, the violent discussion speedily ended. Val Harper resumed his seat on the ground and puffed vigorously at his pipe, which had received so little attention that it went out.

He drew a burning stick from the fire and held one end over the bowl until the tobacco was lighted, when he flung it away and leaned back against a tree without speaking, nor did he utter a word for the next five minutes. Apparently he had exhausted his reserve of argument.

One of his companions spoke a few sentences and then subsided, the others having already done so. The business of the meeting was finished and all was ready for adjournment.

It came sooner than Arlos Hayman expected. As if with one accord, the four men rose to their

feet, grasped their rifles, and strode out of the grove, fortunately for the watcher taking a course which led away from him. It was a singular picture, for the whole party, so far as Arlos could ascertain, did not open their lips.

Hardly waiting for them to disappear, the youth hurried between the trees and through the grove to the other side, his course taking him directly past the campfire where the others were grouped a minute before.

On the edge of the timber he peered out, but brief as was the interval, failed to observe any one of them. They had vanished among the rocks.

“They can’t be far off and I will keep track of them——”

It was a brave resolution, but it received a sudden damper through the discovery that a man was within two or three paces of where he stood with his eyes fixed upon him.

CHAPTER XIV.

A TRAGEDY.

It was a slight chuckle which checked Arlos Hayman as suddenly as if about to step upon a coiled rattlesnake. It came from a point on his left, and, turning his head, he saw the figure of Budd Slogan grinning at him.

"Where under the sun did *you* come from?" asked the pleased youth in an undertone.

"Which the same I might ask of yourself, younker."

"I've been watching the four fellows who just left the grove."

"So have I."

"Did you know I was here?"

"Reckon I did, younker."

"But how could that be when I was on the other side of the camp, where none of them discovered me?"

"That's 'cause they warn't looking for you. I sneaked in among the trees from this side and was

studying them as close as I could, when something showed behind a pine over yonder. It was in a line with the camp, so I seen it without trying. It didn't take me long to observe that it was the edge of a hat rim, which the same I knowed belonged to a sartin tenderfoot that I've charge of just now. I s'posed the Shoshone was with you; what's become of him?"

Arlos told the story of their separation, adding:

"I suspect that he had been ordered to join his people about that time and therefore had to go."

"Most likely that's just what the matter was; you'll see him agin, howsumever."

"I hope so, for I have formed an attachment for him."

"Don't be in too much of a hurry, younker. I'll own that he seems to be a purty decent sort of a redskin, and if he was left to himself he might grow into a gentleman as can be trusted, but don't forgit he has gone back to his people, and there's no saying what devilments they will put into his head. If when he shows hissself agin, he continners to act squar', why it may be safe to conclude he'll do."

"But, Budd, what about these white men? It seems we have more to fear from them than from the Shoshones."

"Correct—they're a bad lot all the way through."

“Are there any beside the four who left a few minutes ago?”

“Yas, there are seven that I’m sartin of, and maybe more are scattered among the mountains; some of ’em are horse thieves, two are counterfeiterers, and one—Val Harper—would be lynched inside of five minutes if he was in Cheyenne. He shot an innocent old man there in cold blood and got out of town in the night on the back of a stolen pony, while the mob was hunting for him. As for horse stealing, burglary, and robbing trains, he has been at it for years.”

“Val Harper?” repeated Arlos. “He was the fellow that tried to scare Ra-lo-no and me.”

“Tried to scare you?” repeated Budd. “Didn’t he do it?”

“Not as much as the Shoshone frightened him.”

“How was that?”

Arlos related the incident which is already familiar to the reader. The guide was so pleased that he shook with silent laughter.

“That’s the best thing that has happened since I fell off the Union Pacific train an account of giving too much attention to my thirst, and rolled down a forty-foot bank and had my head broke; but it shows what I’ve always said, that them ‘bad men,’ as they like to call themselves, is a passel of

cowards that you can bluff out of their boots. Val Harper desarves hanging seventeen times over, and he come nearer passing in his checks five minutes ago than he ever dreamed of. Do you know, younker," added the hunter, "that it was in my mind to sneak round to where I thought you and the Shoshone was, and fix things so as to wipe out Val and one of the scamps at the first fire, and to drop the others afore they could know what was the matter? Only one thing prevented me doing of the same."

"What was that?"

"I was afeard you'd flunk, being as you don't like that style of bus'ness."

"You were right; it's a dreadful thing to shoot a person, and I shall never do it unless to save my life or that of some friend."

"Don't know but what you're right, purvided you leave Val Harper out of the calc'latins."

"You were closer to the camp than I; did you overhear what they said?"

"I caught a good deal of it—enough to know what they was driving at."

"What was it?"

"I reckon from what Val Harper said that the Shoshones have separated into two or three parties, and he thinks there's a good chance to wipe 'em all

out. He was tryin' to persuade 'em to do it, but Jim Wagram was in favor of waiting till night, when he b'lieved they'd have a better show, but Val he insisted that the Shoshones would be in camp all together, with their guards set, and they wouldn't have half the show. He won 'em over to his way of thinking. I obsarved that he spoke of a young kid and a redskin youth—which the same must have been you and your Shoshone friend."

"Undoubtedly; I heard a part of that. But, Budd, ought we to stand here talking, when they are going to slay those poor Indians?"

"They haven't slayed 'em yet, I reckon," replied the guide with a grin.

"But they will do so, unless the Shoshones are warned."

"Don't you worry, younker. Val Harper and his gang never made a bigger mistake than when they made enemies of them same Shoshones, when they could just as well have been friends to 'em. The redskins are on their own tramping grounds, where they kin fight better than any white men. I calc'late as how Val and the rest will find a surprise party waiting for 'em—there they go!"

At that moment the crash of rifle shots was heard. Fully a score of guns were fired at no great distance to the south, the very direction taken by

the four men when they left the grove a short time before.

"We might as well see the fun," coolly remarked Budd Slogan, turning about and striding after them, with the excited Arlos at his heels.

They had not far to pick their way through the rocks when they reached the scene of the encounter.

An impressive feature of the contest was its suddenness and brevity. One moment all was silence, and the two friends were talking together; the next came the spiteful rifle reports, all fired within the space of a few seconds, and then perfect silence again. The conflict was short, sharp, and decisive.

Emerging from one of the rockiest portions of the mountain slope, the two came upon a grove similar to that which they had just left. The resemblance was the closer because of the smoke of a campfire which was discerned rising through the tree tops.

Arlos instinctively paused, and his companion looked inquiringly around.

"What's the matter?" the youth asked in an undertone.

"We must be careful. If the Indians see us they will think we belong to the same party, and open fire."

"You're a sensible younker, but there's no danger. I've met two or three of the Shoshones and they know me. That friend of yours I s'pose is with 'em."

"He may not be. He took another course."

"Right in there," said Budd, indicating the grove, "is where they had the rumpus. Come on."

A few steps further and they came upon a striking scene.

A small campfire was burning at the foot of a large tree. A few feet beyond a white man lay stretched on the ground, desperately, if not mortally, wounded. Kneeling at his side, and partly supporting his head was a young Indian woman, who, seeing the two approach, extended her hand as if to ask for help.

"What does it mean?" asked Arlos, spellbound by the sight.

"I'm blessed if I understand it," replied Budd, as the two paused for a moment and looked at the figures; "but I'm going to find out."

With that he walked forward, Arlos close behind him. As they came up, it was seen that the Indian was little more than a girl. Something in her face recalled Ra-lo-no, and the suspicion flashed upon Arlos that she was the sister of his friend.

But what was she doing here, seeking to comfort

a white man, who was the deadly enemy of her and her people?

His first thought was that the wounded person was Val Harper, but a glance at his countenance showed that such was not the fact. He was one of the four that Arlos had seen around the campfire, and was a stranger to the youth.

"It's Jim Wagram," said Budd, "and he's got it bad."

It was plain that the four white men had counted upon surprising a party of Shoshones in the grove, but were in turn surprised. There had been a fierce interchange of shots, and then the three assailants fled, abandoning their companion and probably carrying away some wounds with them.

What execution had been done among the Indians remained to be seen, for if any of their number had fallen they were carried off. The comely Indian girl, yielding to a pity natural to her sex, had run forward to aid the sufferer, which suggested that her own people had escaped harm.

While these thoughts were passing through Arlos' mind, his companion was holding a conversation with the girl.

"Injuns is queer animals," he remarked, turning to Arlos; "this gal is Ko-mo-mo, the sister of Ralo-no. She and seven or eight of her people had

halted in this grove several hours ago, but didn't start the fire till long afterward, which is why you didn't see it. While they was a-sitting there, smoking their pipes, one of 'em seen the four men coming and knowed what it meant. So they laid for 'em. As I remarked previous, Val Harper and his gang found a s'prise party waiting for 'em. Just as they was ready to fire the Shoshones opened on 'em—one result being what you see there," he added indicating by a nod of the head the figure on the ground.

"Was Ra-lo-no with them?"

"No, nor her father, the medicine man; if either of 'em had been, he wouldn't have let her stay behind to help him."

"She has a heart like her brother," said Arlos, who could not help pitying him who was stretched on his back and evidently close to death.

The two knelt beside the fellow to see whether they could do anything for him.

"Wal, Jim, I'm afeard you've been hit hard," said Budd sympathetically.

The stricken wretch did not move a muscle, except to turn his eyes upon the man who had thus addressed him, and was leaning forward with his face close to his own. A faint smile wrinkled the pale countenance, and he said in a whisper:

"Is that you, Budd?"

"Yes; kin I do anything for you?"

"No; I've got to pass in my checks."

"Was any of the rest hurt?"

"Dunno—guess not—we make a mess of it, but I didn't think the boys would leave me like this."

"It's best they did, for this poor girl that you and them wanted to shoot, is kinder than any of 'em ever would be."

"I—guess—so——"

A faint twitch wrinkled his face, and he was dead.

For several minutes no one spoke. All three looked into the countenance whose repellent features had been softened by the touch of the destroyer which sooner or later must come to us all. Even though he had been among the worst of men, he had now crossed the "great divide," and it was impossible not to feel a glow of sympathy for the miserable being thus cut off in the midst of his crimes.

Then Budd Slogan and Arlos Hayman rose to their feet, still looking down into the face with its half-closed eyes. Ko-mo-mo gazed wonderingly around, and then she took her place beside them. The youth was the first to speak, his voice softened by the solemn environments.

"Is there still nothing to be done for him?"

"Nothing at all," replied Bud, who knew his young friend was thinking of burial.

"Must he be left here?"

"That's what we'll have to do. What difference does it make whether he's six feet under the ground or on top?"

"None, I suppose, though if we had implements I would willingly help dig a grave."

The guide shook his head.

"It ain't to be thought of. He's only himself to blame; but, bad as Jim was, I'm sorry it ain't Val Harper that's laying there."

Ko-mo-mo suddenly laid her hand on Budd's arm and uttered something in her own tongue. She was looking not at him or Arlos, but at a point beyond them.

Her keen hearing had caught the approach of some one who was now in sight.

Turning their heads, the two saw a tall, finely-formed Shoshone warrior standing motionless a few yards away, rifle in hand, and looking steadily at the group, as if to learn what it all meant.

As Budd saw his face he raised his hand and made a sign of comity. The Shoshone was one of the three whom he had met earlier in the day, and an understanding had been established between them.

He returned the sign and came forward, with a friendly nod to both the man and the youth. Then he turned upon Ko-mo-mo and uttered some vigorous expressions.

The listening Budd smiled, for he understood it all. In the flurry of the fight the absence of the girl had not been noticed until after the withdrawal of the Shoshone party. Then one of the warriors was sent for her.

It was known that she was not hurt, and the flight of the white men was too precipitate to take her prisoner. Probably a suspicion of the true reason for her lingering behind was in the mind of the buck before he presented himself and called her to account.

That Ko-mo-mo had a mind of her own was shown by the spirited replies she made to the one who was neither her father nor a relative. She hated the white man when he was trying to harm her people, but the moment he was stricken down it was her duty to give him all the aid she could.

The most crushing rejoinder the warrior could make was the promise to tell her father, the great Wau-mak, medicine man of the Shoshones, with whom he would leave her to settle the account. Instantly she became silent. She would not dare to talk to him as she did to this man. He might pun-

ish her cruelly. Her manifest fear called to mind the hurried departure of her brother, as Arlos believed, in obedience to previous orders of the stern parent.

Budd now opened a conversation with the Indian, who gave him the particulars of the desperate scrimmage which had taken place as described by the girl. Val Harper had counted upon a surprise, and a surprise it was, but not to the Shoshones.

This meeting was a fortunate one for Arlos Hayman, for it established his footing with the Indian hunting party in the neighborhood. True, he had become a friend of Ra-lo-no, but he was liable to meet others of his people before the youth could explain matters.

With him and the warrior now present to "go his security," the rest would learn the situation before any of them saw the paleface youth. Budd Slogan had already made his footing secure. Henceforth the only ones to dread while in the mountains were those of their own race.

While the conversation was going on Ko-mo-mo softly withdrew and started off, taking the course over which the buck had come. He turned his head just a trifle, and glanced at her out of the corner of his eye. He did not smile, but he understood her action. She was in a pout because of his

words, and had set out to join her friends without his escort.

Her feelings were so manifest to Arlos that he was amused. Human nature is the same everywhere. When a girl becomes angry she is pretty certain to show it.

But the flash of lightheartedness quickly passed at sight of the inanimate figure at their feet. Arlos noticed that after the first glance he gave the body the Shoshone did not again look at it.

Although considerable was said by him and Budd Slogan, it occupied but a few minutes. Ko-mo-mo had not yet passed from sight when the Indian hurried after her. The action was a relief to Arlos, who dreaded that she might be seen by one of the white men in the neighborhood, who would not hesitate to do her harm by way of revenge for what they had suffered.

"This is no place for us," said Budd Slogan. "Let's leave."

Arlos was glad to do so, for the spot was filled with woeful associations. Instead of following the white men in their flight, the guide led the way back to the grove where the four had held the council that resulted in the death of one of their own number, who was left lying where he fell.

CHAPTER XV.

AN UNPLEASANT DISCOVERY.

BUDD SLOGAN and Arlos Hayman did not remain in the grove to which they returned after parting with the Shoshone warrior. The guide directed his steps homeward, that is to the cavern in the rocks where they had left their saddles, bridles, and extra articles.

One fact had become clear to both: the headquarters was an inconvenience. They could spend the night in one spot as well as another, and when their wanderings led them a mile and more away, as was the case at the present time, it was a waste of the hours to return thither.

Budd said they would not go there even now, except for their blankets, which they needed during sleep.

"We'll bring 'em with us to-morrer," he added, "and not show up there agin for two or three weeks mebbe."

The night was closing in, and it was not their

intention to do anything until the morrow. Budd had eaten nothing since morning, while Arlos, after his dinner with Ra-lo-no, was as hungry as ever.

While debating whether they should try to secure some game, Budd suggested that they should take a course that would lead them past the spot where the antelope had been shot. This was done, and to their delight they found the carcass just as it had been left, and none the worse for the slight age it had acquired. Liberal portions were cut from it and they continued their walk until their arrival at the spot where the previous night was spent.

Budd decided to change the manner of keeping watch.

"I'll take the first half of the night and you the rest. You'll find it easier to stay awake after a good sleep than afore."

"As you think best, but don't forget I am ready to take my turn."

"You needn't be afeard," he replied with a grin, "that I won't let you do your part; this bus'ness is a partnership right through."

It was yet early in the evening, and as the air was not so cold as the night before, they sat for awhile before the blaze, the guide smoking his pipe

and recalling, as was his pleasure, some of the stirring scenes through which he had passed.

Finally he said :

“Now, younker, if you’ll fetch out my blanket, you kin go to sleep, and I’ll begin the fun of doing nothing.”

Arlos had become so familiar with the interior of the cavern that he needed no light to help find what he wished. He passed through the broad opening, and stooping over, began groping about for the blankets, which, as he remembered, had been neatly folded and laid to one side.

He was surprised when he placed his hands on the spot and touched nothing but solid stone.

“I don’t see how they became changed,” he mused ; “but Budd may have done it after I put things in order. Where can they be?”

A disquieting suspicion caused him to take out his match-safe and strike one of the lucifers. Holding the tiny blaze above his head, he peered around the space which was fully lit up for a few seconds.

Not a nook or cranny escaped his keen scrutiny. Flinging down the burning match, he hastened out to where the guide was calmly smoking, with his back against one of the rocks.

“Budd, thieves have been here !”

“What ?” demanded the other, snatching the

pipe from between his teeth and staring at the youth.

“Our saddles, bridles, blankets—everything has been stolen!”

“Wal, by thunder!” muttered Budd Slogan deliberately, rising to his feet, “are you dead sure that you ain’t lying?”

“Come and see for yourself if you doubt me.”

“How could you tell in the dark?”

“I lit a match; it told me what I have told you.”

“Then there ain’t no use of my going inside; if the things are gone, why they’re gone, and that’s all there is about it.”

Budd Slogan showed no excitement after the first moment, but it was not because he was insensible of the loss they had suffered. He was mad “clean through.” There could be no mistake as to the identity of the thieves. They belonged to Val Harper’s gang, and no doubt the leader himself had a hand in the crime.

The loss of the saddles and bridles implied more, for what could the outlaws want of the articles except to put them to the use for which they were always intended? In other words they had stolen, or intended to steal, the two ponies, which, when last seen, were contentedly cropping the grass in the valley.

Horse stealing on the frontier ranks as the highest capital crime, whose punishment is often severer than that meted out for taking the life of a human being. Could Budd Slogan have been able to draw bead on the thief he would have taken more delight in shooting him down than in slaying a ravening grizzly bear.

Arlos Hayman was at his wits' end. The crisis was for the guide to handle, and he stood silently watching him until he made known his decision.

The action of the veteran was peculiar. His rifle was leaning against the face of the rock, and his hands were free. He folded his arms, slung one foot round in front of the other, so that only his back touched the boulder, bent his head, and seemed to be looking into the blaze, while his thoughts were far away. Occasionally a slight puff of smoke came from between his lips, the action being mechanical, and for fully five minutes he did not stir or speak.

Suddenly he called in his wandering fancies, and turned his eyes upon the youth, who noted their threatening glitter.

"Younker," said he in a sharp, brusque voice, "be you afraid to be left alone?"

"Haven't I proved that I am not?"

"Yes, you have; wal, I'm going to leave you alone."

“For how long?”

“Can’t say ; mebbe for a day, or three days, but hardly a week.”

“Very well.”

The hunter looked admiringly at the youth, who made this reply in a matter-of-fact tone.

“You’ve got grit and no mistake. I’m going after them ponies, likewise as aforesaid the saddles, bridles, and other things ; I ain’t coming back either till I fetch ’em.”

“I supposed such was your purpose, but, Budd, can’t I be of help?”

The guide shook his head.

“That was what kept me thinking so long. I’d like to take you with me, for you know how to shoot a gun and, though you’re a little chicken-hearted when it comes to p’inting it at a man, yet you’d do it if it was necessary ; but this bus’ness is likely to take a shape where you can’t help but will hinder it.”

“Very well ; as you think best. I have my Winchester, revolver, and plenty of ammunition, and ought to be able to take care of myself. What would you advise me to do?”

“You’re so eager to find that young friend of your’n from Denver that you’ll put in most of your time hunting for him, but afore you look for him

you want to find t'other chap, which his name is Ra-lo-no."

"I fully agree with you."

"He'll fix it to help you look for t'other one, and you won't have much trouble in finding the Shoshone."

"He may be as elusive as Dolph Bushkirk."

"He'd be a good deal more so if it warn't for one thing; he'll be looking for you; he went home to fix things with his folks so he could do that. He knows who you're so anxious to meet and he'll help."

"I shall succeed, with the aid of one who understands the woods so well."

That which caused Arlos more regret than the loss of the valuable property was the disappearance of the minor things. The theft of the bear's claws and several articles of toilet, but especially the first named, brought a pang. If he essayed to tell the story of his encounter with the gigantic beast, he would have to use great discretion to gain belief.

"Now," said Budd, "this 'ere bus'ness wants a little plainer understanding than we had afore. The reports of the guns will be the same—two quick firings mean 'come' and three 'come powerful quick.' That's all clear enough, but we may be miles apart, when the shooting of our guns won't

count, for it might take half a day for us to come together even if the sounds could be heard. We've seen the smoke of a good many campfires; there ain't no way of telling whether some of 'em are friends or enemies 'cept by the sneak act, at the risk of having your head blowed off. Now when I start a fire that I mean for a signal for you, you'll observe that it'll wobble."

"Please explain a little more clearly."

"The smoke will go right up straight, as you always see it, and like any well-behaved campfire, but then it'll break and scatter as if it had been fired into and busted all to flinders. You'll make yours perform the same way."

"I'll be glad to do it if you'll tell me how."

"It's easy enough. After the fire's fairly going, you'll fan the smoke with your hat sort of careful like, and it won't take you long to larn the trick."

"It's a good plan; I will not forget it. How soon will you start?"

"Now; good-night?"

Snatching up his rifle, which he held in a trailing position, Budd Slogan strode into the gloom, immediately vanishing from sight.

Arlos had not supposed that the guide would leave him thus abruptly. He expected him to wait until morning, but he had not done so, and it

only remained for the youth to make the best he could of the situation.

One thing was apparent: the man was in the most dangerous mood possible, for, were it otherwise, he would have postponed action until sunrise. He must have formed a suspicion of where to look for the horse thieves, and was not willing to lose time by waiting. Even if he knew such waiting would not be lost, he was so angered that he was forced to find relief in action.

“There will be desperate work before he comes back,” was the thought of Arlos, who stood for a minute or two, gazing at the point where his friend had melted from sight in the darkness; “but it is idle to speculate; it will not help him, and if I could have been of any assistance he would have taken me along. I must now give attention to my own affairs.”

The question with Arlos was whether he should withdraw into the cavern and try to sleep. The bed couldn't be any harder, for it was stone, but several considerations caused him to change his first decision to retire for the night.

He was so flurried and wrought up that he did not believe he would be able to sleep even had his couch been more comfortable; but the most disquieting thought was that the spot had been so

recently visited by enemies. The feeling was that, having been there a brief time before, they were likely to come again. Arlos would be in a sorry plight if found unconscious by the vicious outlaws.

"They didn't leave anything to steal, but Val Harper wants revenge for what occurred to-day; so the best thing I can do is to make a change of base." And Arlos, too, passed out into the night.

He walked softly, and peered here and there in the darkness, half-expecting to see the outlines of one of the men stealing toward him, but nothing of that nature was observed.

Could he have known where to find a place that would permit of such a thing he would have lain down and slept.

The hardest thing, however, for a person to do when placed in his position is to do nothing, and he moved up the valley with the care and caution he had shown from the first.

The misfortune to which every one is exposed when traveling through the trackless woods, or in the night, when all landmarks are hidden from sight, is that of journeying in a circle and returning to the starting point.

Many explanations have been given of this curious tendency. The most probable is that we are all born left or right-handed.

Arlos escaped this mishap by following the stream up the valley, keeping it within sight or hearing until he reached the falls, near which Ra-lo-no had brought down the antelope the day before. Here he sought for some nook or cranny in the rocks that would serve him, but none was satisfactory, and turning to the right he continued his aimless groping with the prospect of keeping it up all night.

But an unexpected interruption came. He had passed round an obstructing boulder and stumbled over a large stone, when to his amazement he caught the glimmer of a light a short distance ahead.

He stopped, puzzled and alarmed. His first thought was that he had approached the camp of the white men. He turned to flank it, when he was restrained by the suspicion that he might be mistaken.

From where he stood he could see nothing but the glow of the fire, which had smoldered low. No figures, either moving about or lying down, were to be distinguished.

The youth was stealing forward, when he was seized with the grip of a giant and flung to the ground with a violence that almost drove his senses from him.

CHAPTER XVI.

IN THE HOUSE OF FRIENDS.

ARLOS HAYMAN believed that his approach to the strange campfire was so guarded and noiseless that no sentinel could possibly detect him. It may be said that he went forward inch by inch, often pausing, and continually peering to the right and left and looking back to make sure that no one came upon him from any direction.

And yet a man flung himself forward with resistless violence, and crushed him helplessly to the earth. So fiercely indeed was this done that his Winchester flew from his hand and his hat rolled several feet away.

Not doubting that he was in the grip of Val Harper or one of his men, the youth struggled desperately to draw his revolver. He set his teeth but did not speak, bending all his energies toward defending himself.

He was active and he had become strong, but the man who had downed him was still stronger and quickly proved himself his master.

The two were beyond the faint light thrown out by the campfire, so that Arlos could not indentify the man, who was upon his chest and holding his arms immovably against his body. Believing his death imminent, the youth continued his resistance with all the power at his command.

As he writhed his position changed so that his threshing feet were twisted toward the fire. At the side of the incubus on his breast suddenly appeared a second person, who excitedly uttered something in a tongue which the youth did not comprehend.

Its peculiar, jerky character, however, had acquired a certain familiarity to him. It was not a white man that had hurled him to the ground, but a Shoshone Indian, and the one who was making so vigorous use of his tongue was his old friend Ra-lo-no.

Two of the Shoshones were acting as sentinels. One was Ra-lo-no, but he was posted on the other side of the camp. It had been made clear to the Indian hunting party that Budd Slogan and his companion were as good friends as the other couple that had been encountered, and who were then at no great distance.

Had Arlos been a known enemy he would have been shot down or slain with the knife; but it was

the uncertainty about his identity that caused the sentinel to hold him unharmed but helpless until the truth should be ascertained.

It took Ra-lo-no but a moment to discover that the tall youth on the ground was his old or rather his new friend. His energetic words enlightened the warrior, who sprang from Arlos' chest and extended his hand to help him to his feet, making at the same time profuse apologies.

It is safe to say the words were meant for an apology, though not one was intelligible to the young gentleman to whom they were addressed. He could not discern the face of Ra-lo-no, but he recognized his voice, and the dim glow of the campfire behind him showed the outlines of his stocky figure.

"Don't mention it," protested Arlos, whose lucky escape and fortunate meeting raised his spirits to so high a point that he forgot the late struggle, and the aches that had not yet left his body; "it was rather a warm reception, but I didn't give the password, because it wasn't asked me and I didn't know what it was. I suppose that is the Shoshone style of challenging a stranger, and I don't object."

All three walked to the campfire. Ra-lo-no flung some wood upon it and by the glare of the flames the faces of all three were disclosed. They looked

at one another with curious expressions. The broad countenance of the young Shoshone of course was bisected by his enormous grin. The other Indian was the one with whom Budd Slogan had held the talk that afternoon, when Jim Wagram lay lifeless at their feet.

The face of this Indian was grave, not the faintest smile appearing. He fixed his black eyes on the youth, who, as the best means of showing his good will despite his rough treatment, extended his hand.

The warrior accepted it and managed to say, "Howdy?" which marked the extent of his attainments in the study of English literature.

Then Ra-lo-no offered his hand, and the youths saluted each other as if they were brothers, meeting after the lapse of many years. There was no mistake about the friendship there.

The fire was now burning so vigorously that it threw a wide glare in all directions. The warrior returned to his duty as sentinel, leaving the youths together.

Arlos looked around him with curious interest, for the sight which greeted his eyes was a novel one. When Val Harper gave it as his belief that the Shoshones would encamp together at night, he was correct. Here they were and this was their camp.

Figures were seen extended on the ground in the gloom, most of them wrapped in their blankets, and apparently asleep, but a slight stirring here and there proved that they had been awakened by the disturbance. Arlos saw the glitter of more than one pair of eyes, from the enfolding covering, but the warriors must have been satisfied that all was right, for they made no further move and soon sank into dreamland again.

The most interesting object, however, was a tepee or wigwam, indistinctly revealed by the firelight. It stood so far back that only the front showed. It was composed of skins sewed together and stretched over a number of poles, wide apart at the bottom and uniting at the top to form the apex. All was silent around it, and the flap which served as a door was down, so that the aboriginal residence was closed.

Ra-lo-no had his duty to perform as sentinel. His keen eyes told him that his visitor was tired, and was without any blanket. Whatever he conjectured to be the cause, he did not hesitate.

Moving softly to the tepee, he stooped down, drew aside the flap, and was absent only a minute. When he came forth, he brought a blanket, which he spread on the ground near the fire and motioned to Arlos that it was at his service.

Nothing could have been more welcome, and expressing his thanks as best he could, the young paleface lay down, drew the folds about him, and almost immediately dropped to sleep.

He was awakened by the stir and confusion of the camp. Sitting erect, he gazed wonderingly at the dusky figures, none of whom manifested the slightest interest in him. Naturally he looked for Ra-lo-no, or his sister, Ko-mo-mo, but they were not in sight. All were strangers, the sentinel who handled him so roughly being among the missing.

There was no cause, however, for misgiving. He was among friends. He retained his sitting posture upon the blanket and watched the curious scene with interest.

Naturally his first glance was at the tepee. It was still closed and all was silent about it. The skins of which it was composed seemed to be from the buffalo, with the furry side turned inward. The smooth surface outside had been whitened, first by a rude tanning process, increased by exposure and use. The skins were joined at the edges by long stitches of thread made from the sinews of the deer, and some budding aboriginal artist had made drawings with a species of black and red chalk, which recalled Arlos' efforts on his slate when five or six years old.

"I suppose that is the residence of the medicine man," he thought, "and he is too dignified and important to mingle with the common people."

Two other fires had been started, and at each a warrior was cooking meat for the morning meal. No ponies were in sight, but since it was certain that a number had been used to bring the luggage, as well as to serve for riding, they were probably grazing in the neighborhood under the watchful eyes of their guards.

Arlos noticed that the warriors were all sinewy, fine-looking men, and each seemed to be armed with rifle and knife. He did not observe a single bow or arrow, though he knew these people will never wholly abandon those aboriginal weapons.

He was still studying the interesting panorama, when some one touched his shoulder. He looked around and there stood Ko-mo-mo, smiling, and looking so much like Ra-lo-no that there could be no doubt they were brother and sister.

Arlos instantly rose to his feet, and, having donned his hat, took it off again and bowed with his best grace. She spoke, but he smilingly shook his head to signify he did not understand her.

She motioned him to follow, and led the way beyond the camp to a tiny stream of clear, icy cold water, which plashed from among the rocks.

Pointing to it she said something, and then left him.

Arlos bathed his hands and face, took a few swallows, and extended his arms above his head with the luxurious feeling which comes with perfect health and high spirits.

Presently Ra-lo-no appeared, coming from the direction of the camp. He formed so pleasing a picture, with his short heavy stick in one hand and his blanket flung over his shoulder, that Arlos, who possessed considerable skill in sketching, motioned for him to stand still. It required several minutes to understand what was wanted, but he finally "caught on," and struck a pose.

Arlos set to work with his pencil and was very successful. The likeness was so good that when the artist handed it to the young Shoshone he stood for a few moments struck dumb with delight. Then he looked at the smiling Arlos, and indulged in the exuberant mirth displayed the day before at sight of the terror of Val Harper. He leaned over and laughed until ready to fall to the earth. Then he stopped with comical suddenness, and held the paper out before him, his face as solemn as that of a judge.

The next moment over he went, the dangling black hair almost touching the ground from his low

obeisance, as he gave himself up to a merriment which threatened to take away his power of breathing.

It was so funny that Arlos laughed almost as heartily as he. Finally, Ra-lo-no seemed to regain mastery of himself, and motioned for the instrument with which this marvelous work had been done.

He examined the little cedar stick and the tiny plumbago with curious interest. Gently touching the point to the back of the sheet of paper, he made several wabbling strokes and stared at the black lines thus produced.

Arlos struck an attitude and signed for him to try his hand. The Shoshone began the effort, and then the scene became funnier than ever.

He held his breath, ran out his tongue, and his eyes bulged as he watched the course of the pencil, glancing often at the young man, who with his arms folded was vainly trying to repress his merriment.

"Ah-oogh-oogh!" soon exclaimed Ra-lo-no in disgust, shaking his head to signify that he had made a shocking failure of the attempt. Arlos stepped forward, and when he had looked at the grotesque image of himself he gave way to his feeling of amusement. He was compelled to admit

that with all the brightness displayed by the dusky youth nature never meant him to be an artist.

Suddenly an idea struck the Indian. He motioned to Arlos to stay where he was, and with paper and pencil in hand hurried away to camp.

"I suppose he will bring some one else for me to sketch. I'm afraid I've got myself into trouble, for I may have to make pictures of the whole tribe."

After a long wait Ra-lo-no appeared, leading his sister by the hand. Two children of half a dozen years could not have had more happy anticipations.

The brother had explained to his people and her the astounding thing done by the paleface with the little stick of wood and its black point. The picture of the youth was a demonstration of his genius, and now Ko-mo-mo presented herself for delineation on paper.

The delay of Ra-lo-no had been caused by the preparation on the part of his sister for the momentous ordeal. What pretty young lady sits for her photograph without making ready therefor?

Her friends must have meant to guard her carefully against any violent changes in the weather, for she had brought with her a suit which would have been ample protection in the Arctic regions. The heavy hood which inclosed her shapely head

was fringed with fur, and the neck was encircled by a good imitation of the article known as a boa.

Arlos Hayman did his best to produce a faithful picture of the young woman, who stood immovable as a statue during the task, as she would have stood had it continued for an hour.

He met with gratifying success, and completed the sketch by filling it in. He depicted the sloping mountains in the background, with the rocks and pines scattered here and there, including the vegetation directly around and behind her.

When the sketch was finished Arlos with a bow handed it to Ko-mo-mo, who was affected differently from her brother. She stood for a few seconds with her eyes fixed intently upon it, and then, without a smile, uttered a deep sigh.

She did not address a word to Ra-lo-no. The occasion was one of those in which she could not do justice to her emotions.

Brother and sister were happy beyond expression. and yet neither of them was more so than he who had given them this pleasure. He read the delight glowing in both faces and could not help reflecting :

“They are human beings like ourselves; they have the same feelings, the same capacities, the same sense of right and wrong, and are entitled to justice. Surely something is amiss and much blame

belongs to my race when we are continually at war with these people. It has been war and outrage from the first settlement of the country, and I suppose it will be to the end, unless," he added, "our government puts a conscience in the management of public affairs."

CHAPTER XVII.

THE CROTALUS.

ARLOS HAYMAN could not fail to note the admiring glances of the Shoshones who examined his handiwork.

To his relief he was not kept waiting for his first meal of the day. The Indians were favored with as vigorous appetites as himself, and the supply of well-broiled venison brought to him by Ra-lo-no and his sister Ko-mo-mo was all that he could desire.

Knives and forks are not in special favor among the aborigines, though, as I have said, the civilized tribes lack no convenience or luxury. The only implement used by the Shoshones was the hunting knife, which also served the paleface guest, for he had learned its use before his visit to their camp.

Arlos felt a great curiosity regarding the big tepee, some distance away. While he had received no information respecting it, he was convinced that it belonged to the medicine man, the father of his two young friends.

For some reason this dignitary, rated in some respects above a war chief, kept out of sight. The flap door was still in place, and not the slightest glimpse could be obtained of the interior, though the situation of the youth was favorable for seeing.

The meal being finished, Ra-lo-no sprang to his feet, and again entered the lodge by crouching and passing through the door. He speedily reappeared with an excellent rifle, and pausing in front of Arlos, grinned and signified that he was ready to aid him in the hunt for his friend.

It will be remembered that Budd Slogan had explained the wishes of the youth to the young Shoshone, who easily read the meaning of the visit of the paleface the evening before.

At the moment of setting forth, a peculiar exclamation struck Arlos' ear. He turned and saw the flap of the tepee partly drawn aside, and the face of a middle-aged Indian peering out.

It was similar to that of the others, the long black hair dangling about the shoulders, but there was something in the stern, savage expression which identified him as the great medicine man who persisted in remaining invisible.

His call was addressed to Ra-lo-no, who bounded to his side, pausing directly before his parent, and listening respectfully to what he had to say.

Arlos saw the youth nod his head and heard him reply. Whatever passed was satisfactory to both, for the face was withdrawn and the son came back to his guest.

With nothing in the nature of a farewell, the young Shoshone walked out of camp, taking a northern direction. Ko-mo-mo was the only one who gave any attention to the two. She stood looking attentively at them, the end of her forefinger between her lips, for all the world like a child pouting because she is deprived of some coveted pleasure.

"She wants to go with us," thought Arlos; "she would be pleasant company, but her brother is wise to leave her behind."

Ra-lo-no had not brought any blanket or extra covering for his companion, and left behind his own thick garment which hitherto he had carried with him. This Arlos accepted as proof that he expected to spend the night in his own camp.

It was a relief that the dusky youth was provided with a rifle. He carried also a belt of cartridges, so that he was equipped in the improved modern style, and he knew how to use the formidable weapon, which was a repeating one like that of Arlos Hayman.

The business of the youth was to find Dolph

Bushkirk, and incidentally Varnum Brown, his guide and friend. Arlos had not the remotest idea of what course to take in order to do this, and relied wholly on his companion.

What clew the young Shoshone possessed, or what reason there was for believing he would do better than the paleface, was beyond the power of the latter to conjecture; but the astonishing skill of the dusky guide as a trailer and woodman left no doubt in the mind of Arlos that the chances of success were greater than ever before.

"I have it!" he exclaimed, while stepping closely in the other's footsteps. "He saw Dolph only a few days ago; he will go to the exact spot; there he will take the trail and follow it up. It will be as easy for him as rolling off a log."

The ground over which they traveled was similar to that already described, consisting of rocks, bowlders, and depressions, with here and there scraggly growths of pine, yawning crevices, glimpses of deep ravines, dizzying precipices, and now and then long, level valleys, through some of which coursed streams of water, with an exuberant growth of grass on every hand.

Arlos kept directly behind his guide, for traveling in this fashion was easier than abreast. Indeed it was not often that the latter course was possible.

As they journeyed the paleface made good use of his eyes. He looked not only on the ground, but in the air; yet did not catch the first sight of the smoke of campfires, although on the preceding day such indications were plentiful.

Ra-lo-no did not speak or look around. He assumed that his companion would keep close to his heels, and his sense of hearing told him he was doing so. Like the elder members of his tribe, he gave his entire attention to the business before him.

It was while the two youths were making their way in the most natural manner that a startling incident took place.

Arlos was admiring the free, easy swing of his guide, as he passed over or around obstructions with as much facility as across the open plain, when the Indian gave utterance to an exclamation, and leaped backward so suddenly that he well-nigh carried the astonished Arlos off his feet. A spiteful, buzzing rattle heard at the same moment warned both that the peril was in the form of a rattlesnake.

Ra-lo-no had almost stepped on the venomous reptile, and only his astonishing agility saved him from the sting of the small flat head, which darted forward like the flash of a sunbeam. Instances have been known of the *crotalus* species biting without the usual preliminary notice.

In the present instance the dart of the head was made while the tail was vibrating, so that the warning was no warning at all.

But the Shoshone was beyond reach of the vicious thing. He stood motionless and contemplated the serpent, which was still in coil and bristling with anger.

He was a formidable specimen, the upper part of his body thicker than a man's wrist, while the elevated tail, whose tip vibrated so fast that it looked like mist in the air, showed more than a dozen rattles.

Ra-lo-no took several steps forward, which again carried him perilously near the terrible snake. Its head was drawn back like the neck of a swan, ready and eager to repeat its blow.

It waited, however, for its enemy to draw a little closer, and he did it, edging up carefully, inch by inch.

"Have a care," said Arlos, forgetting that his words were not understood; "they strike quickly, and you are nearer than you ought to be."

He laid his hand on Ra-lo-no's shoulder. The Indian drew back a single step, enough to insure himself against a bite; then turned so as to look into the face of his alarmed companion, smiled, and shook his head to imply that he knew what he was doing.

"I don't suppose you thank me for interfering, but any man is a fool, I don't care if his skin is copper-colored, who plays with a rattlesnake."

Ra-lo-no was inching forward once more. He held the muzzle of his Winchester toward the reptile, as if to use it as a stick with which to stir it up.

No need of that, for the rattler was almost bursting with fury, and was sure to strike the next instant.

And he did. There was one horrible moment when Arlos was sure that the fang had entered the ankle of his daring friend, but he had saved himself by the narrowest margin conceivable. The nose of the reptile touched the thick cloth of the trousers' leg at the bottom, darting instantly back again to repeat the blow.

The grinning Shoshone turned around and pointed to the spot just above his shoe. Looking closely, Arlos observed several drops of a clear, honey-like substance shining on the texture of the cloth. It was the venom projected from the reptile's fangs, which, if it had entered the circulation of the Shoshone's body, would have killed him within the space of a few minutes.

Arlos shook his head impatiently. He was displeased with his companion's actions, but the latter,

without relaxing his grin, addressed himself to the work of extracting a little more fun from the situation.

Arlos, standing a few paces back and behind him, was tempted to end the strained situation by shooting off the head of the rattler. He could easily do it, and he partly raised his rifle, but lowered it again.

"It would offend him. He has seen those things before, and must know how close he can go to the line. He may do what he pleases for all me."

Ra-lo-no was stealing up again, his body slightly bent, so as to thrust his head forward. His right hand, which held his gun, was extended, and with the muzzle he poked the frightful coil hard enough to hurt.

The rattler was so enraged that it again shot its head forward, this time aiming for the tantalizing face. Arlos uttered a gasp, believing a fatal blow had been delivered, but the Shoshone knew what would be the target when the reptile struck with his only partially-refilled fangs. He knew, too, just how far the fearful head would come, and he did a most surprising thing.

Arlos saw him make a swinging, half-circular movement with his right hand, it being done so quickly that the spectator hardly followed the

action, but, incredulous as it may seem, he brought the muzzle of his gun fairly against the front of the rattler at the instant the neck was extended to its fullest length.

The blow, it will be understood, was a side one, and was delivered with such wonderful quickness that it landed directly behind the head of the snake with the vicious force of a rifle ball.

The neck of the reptile was darting back to resume its poise above the coil of the body. It managed to do so, but failed to take the head with it.

Ra-lo-no did that which he had planned to do. He sent the triangular point spinning twenty feet away. It fell out of sight behind a boulder, and the furiously writhing body quickly ceased its struggles.

The *crotalus* species is easily killed, and when one of them is deprived of his head, he must surely succumb.

The young Shoshone looked once more at his companion, who signified by gesture that he was not pleased with what had been done. Then he tried to remind Ra-lo-no that where one of these reptiles is found its mate is not likely to be far off.

That the Shoshone understood his meaning was shown by his reply. He pointed to a flat rock, a

couple of rods distant, where a similar serpent was seen, also in coil, as if waiting to be attacked.

"I'll end this tomfoolery," muttered Arlos, bringing his gun to his shoulder and sending a ball into the coil, which effectually settled the second rattler.

The body of the first was now examined. That it was a monstrous specimen was shown by its eighteen rattles and a button. There was the possibility, too, that it had lost several joints from its strange appendix so that it may have been considerably more than a score of years old.

It was early in the season for rattlers, and these two were the first that Arlos had seen since coming west. He had no wish to meet any more, for while, like most of us, he detested all species of serpents, whether harmless or otherwise, he was well aware of the peculiarly dangerous nature of the *crotalus*, which annually causes the death of many persons and animals in the civilized east as well as in the west.

The incident being finished, the two dismissed it from their minds. The delay had not lasted more than ten minutes, and Ra-lo-no now stepped off with his usual brisk and sure gait, which made light of every obstacle.

They were in a part of the mountains which was wholly strange to Arlos. Aware that his guide

needed no aid from him, he did little except to follow like a dog at the heels of his master.

Although the young Shoshone might tramp for hours in this manner without halt, it was not long before he was compelled to pause in front of an obstruction of a nature not before encountered.

This was a mountain stream, which at its narrowest portion was all of a dozen feet wide. It flowed between rocks, fifteen or twenty feet above the current, which sped so swiftly that it almost made one dizzy to look down at it.

The water was clear and the depth great. Its appearance suggested that it was a river compressed into the canyon, which may have borne it onward until it united with the White, Bear, Grand, Platte, Yampa, or some of the other numerous streams that have their sources in this part of the Rocky Mountains.

The halt of the Shoshone implied that it was necessary to cross the obstruction which confronted them. With a smile he pointed to the opposite bank, that was several feet higher than the one on which they were standing.

“Gracious!” thought Arlos, “he is asking me whether I can jump across. I wonder whether he is able to do it. I never took a challenge from any boy at home, and if he is willing to try it so am I.”

As well as he could by gesture, the youth replied that he was ready to follow where the Shoshone dared to lead.

“Agh—oogh—Ra-lo-no—oogh !”

Ra-lo-no understood him. He looked keenly at the opposite shore, drew back a half dozen steps, ran quickly to the edge of the stream and leaped forward

Arlos Hayman clapped his hands. It was the finest exploit of the kind he had ever witnessed. With scarcely a perceptible effort, the stocky figure rose in the air, seemingly poised for a moment over the canyon, and then landed lightly, fully a pace beyond the further edge. He took one step forward, in obedience to his own momentum, and turned to watch Arlos do the same.

“This is the most risky thing I ever undertook,” the white youth reflected; “when we vaulted or leaped at home, if we failed why we failed, and that was all there was of it. The only unpleasant consequences were those of being beaten by the other fellow; but **here** failure may mean death. I have striven for some pretty valuable prizes, but nothing the equal of what is now at stake.”

Meanwhile the young Shoshone was calmly waiting for him.

“I don’t see how I can get out of it without a

flunk which will make me ashamed of myself. So here goes!"

He moved back twice as far as his guide had done. Holding his gun in one hand, he dashed forward at his utmost speed, and, with his last resting-place on the rocky edge, gathered his muscles for the supreme effort.

It can hardly be doubted that if Arlos Hayman had been in his usual condition he would have performed the exploit with the facility of his predecessor. I have already shown that he had made marvelous gains in strength and activity, but it must be remembered that the time occupied in thus building up his body was brief.

Great as was his improvement, he was not yet the same youth whose physical prowess had been the admiration of his friends and classmates.

A leaper knows whether he is going to succeed or fail at the very beginning of his attempt. A sprawling tumble is not necessary to tell him the woeful truth that he is certain to fall short.

While in the act of leaving his support, with his foot still resting on the edge of the canyon, but too late to draw back, Arlos felt that he had undertaken a task beyond his power of accomplishment. His lips were compressed; he held his breath and sent up a prayer for success.

But all the same he knew that he was doomed to failure in the most daring attempt of his life.]

It may have been that the watchful Ra-lo-no read the startling truth, for he instantly prepared to give all the aid he could. Dropping on his knees, he reached out his hand to grasp that of his friend.

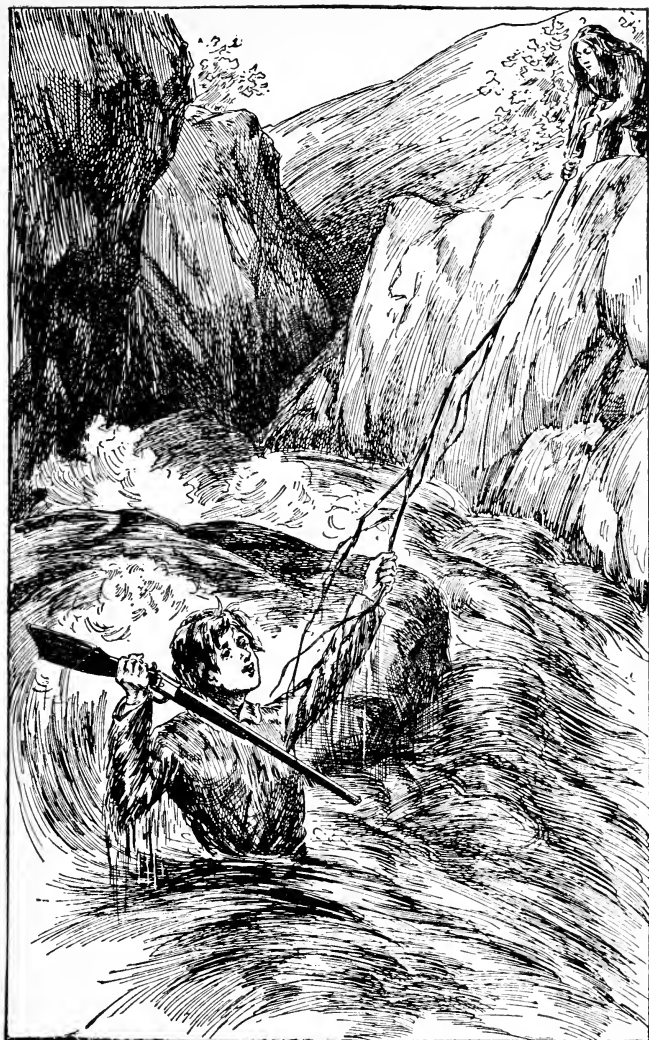
Their fingers actually touched for a brief second, and the dusky youth ran the risk of precipitating himself headforemost into the canyon in his desperate effort to help, but he failed. Arlos, with his scared face turned upward, sped down the face of the rock like a cannon ball into the swirling water, passing deep below the surface, but quickly appearing again.

He was an excellent swimmer and did not lose his presence of mind. His Winchester was clutched in his left hand, but he was able to swim with his right and his feet, and he made good use of them.

It was idle to try to stem the current, against which a torpedo boat could not have forced its way, so he coolly faced about and went with it.

"I'm bound to come out somewhere," was his grim thought as he compressed his lips and shot down stream with arrowy swiftness.

Strange that in that trying moment Arlos' one controlling emotion was impatience with himself, amounting to exasperation. A year before he would



Arlos once more entered the swift current and was rescued.—Page 218.



have thought nothing of making the leap which cost his friend so slight an effort, but now he had failed most humiliatingly.

He had been beaten "out of sight," for the first time in his life, and it filled him with wrath. He meant to rescue himself without the help of any one.

But indignant as he was he could not forget his peril. Clearing the water from his eyes, he saw ere he had gone a hundred feet the head of a black, dripping rock protruding from the middle of the stream and directly in his path.

His first intention was to dart to the right of this, hoping for some way out of his dilemma beyond, but a shout caused him to look up. Ra-lo-no had run along the side of the canyon so rapidly as to keep almost abreast of him. He was shouting and pointing at the rock in front of the swimmer.

The latter could not understand his words nor the meaning of his excited gestures, but he interpreted them as a command to him to catch upon the rock and check himself. At any rate Arlos acted upon that supposition.

So swift was his course that it looked as if he would be hurled against the huge stone with fatal violence. But keeping his eye on the formidable object which appeared to be plunging toward him, while he was stationary, he put forth his utmost

exertion in the effort to swim against the resistless current.

He could not do this, but the "brake" thus put on his momentum did good service and enabled him to keep command of his senses, so that when the shock of impact came he was only slightly bruised. He drew himself up out of reach of the fierce torrent.

Looking around, now that he had the chance to gather his wits, he observed that the bank from which he had leaped was all of twenty feet distant, while the one upon which Ra-lo-no was standing was about two-thirds as far off. It might have been a hundred yards, so far as leaping it was concerned, and sitting down on the dripping rock Arlos looked at his friend, as if to ask him what was to be done.

The Shoshone ought to have been a Yankee, for he hit upon the right scheme without a moment's speculation. It took but a few seconds to cut a long, thin hickory sapling, the smaller end of which he reached to Arlos, who was smiling at the scheme. He grasped it firmly, and then nodded to Ra-lo-no to pull.

The dusky youth steadied himself as Arlos once more entered the fearfully swift and deep current, and then tugged and pulled and strained, and lo, it was done. The two friends stood beside each other again.

CHAPTER XIX.

ON THE TRAIL.

ARLOS shook the hand of his rescuer, who, looking at him with his odd grin, turned and walked away as if nothing out of the usual order had happened. A hundred yards further he paused near a large tree and pointed to the ground.

The reason was apparent. A heap of ashes and charred bits of wood showed that a fire had been burning there not long before, which of itself was proof that certain persons had encamped on the spot.

“This must be where he saw Dolph and Brown; he will take their trail and keep to it until he finds them. It may be slow business, but it is sure.”

No doubt Arlos was correct in his theory, for the Shoshone waited only a few minutes, when he strode off with the same pace as before, abruptly halting on the margin of the grove, where his action became incomprehensible to Arlos.

There was so much damp earth that by close study the paleface clearly saw the trail which bore to the right toward a more rocky and desolate section. The puzzle to him was that Ra-lo-no instead of following this path, which must have been as clear to him as "the road to the mill," gave it no attention.

He appeared to be studying the face of the mountainous region spread out before him, as if an altogether different problem had presented itself to his mind.

An interesting fact remained for Arlos Hayman to learn. While nearly every American Indian possesses surprising skill in trailing a person or animal, he often pursues a different method from what is generally supposed. Thus, on the plains of the Southwest, when he traces an enemy to a river crossing, he pauses to study the country in advance, and theorizes as to what is likely to be the course of the one whom he is tracking.

He decides what the point is at which the fugitive is aiming, and then bends all his energies to reaching it, regardless of the trail itself, which probably has been made winding and tortuous for the purpose of misleading him.

If he is correct in his theory, he may reach the destination scores of miles ahead of the other party,

and lie in ambush or prepare to receive the surprised individual when he arrives. Some of the most successful exploits of the famous Kit Carson were performed in this manner, his intimate knowledge of the country and the peculiarities of the Indians whom he was pursuing rendering his judgment almost infallible.

It must follow also that if the pursuer happens to err in his calculations as to the line of flight and destination of his enemies, an almost irreparable blunder is the result.

The Shoshone was occupied for some minutes in studying the formation of the country and the course the man and youth would be likely to take after leaving their camp in the grove. It was a difficult task, which, as has been stated, was not understood by his companion, who had expected him to follow the trail that was marked so plainly that no one could fail to note it.

Now, if Ra-lo-no could determine whither the two had gone, it will be seen that he had only to make his way directly to that point. This would dispense with the laborious trailing, and would save hours of time.

The dusky guide soon reached his conclusion, and instead of turning to the right, moved forward, or toward the east. He had laid out a rough route for

himself, compelling many detours and the crossing of two small streams, which they passed without wetting their feet.

At a third, they removed their shoes and stockings and waded across. They went through more wooded territory, climbed several steep ascents, and finally reached a clump of trees on the border of another small stream.

How far they had traveled Arlos could only guess, but he believed it was not less than half a dozen miles of the hardest work he had done since leaving home. An evidence of this was the time consumed, for when he examined his watch he saw that it was past two o'clock.

It need not be said that he was hungry, for that was his normal condition, but he determined to let his companion know nothing of it, even though aware that his people often make little of going without food for two or three days.

"I can stand it until nightfall," Arlos decided; "then he will notice my famishing condition and take pity on me. All the same, if I could get sight of a deer, antelope, or anything eatable, I would pop it over."

The Shoshone had halted and was studying the ground immediately in front of him. His companion did the same, and to his astonishment

saw that they had reached the site of another camp.

There were the ashes, the charred embers and other signs which proved that one person or more had halted there, most likely for the night.

It was then that the motive for Ra-lo-no's course became clear to Arlos. The shrewd guide had settled in his own mind the spot where Dolph Bushkirk and his companion were likely to camp the succeeding night, and had gone directly thither regardless of the trail, which pursued a much longer and more winding course.

"It looks to me as if it's taking big chances, but the result paid this time. I don't know how it will work when he tries it again."

The Shoshone stepped forward and kicked apart the dead sticks. As the ashes were scattered, it was seen that the end of one of the sticks was aglow. He picked it up, and blew upon the ember, which broke into a tiny blaze.

"That's good work!" exclaimed the delighted Arlos. "It proves that my friends spent last night here. They can't be far off, and we must find them."

As several days had passed since the Shoshone saw the others, it was hard to understand how Arlos' theory could be accurate.

He explained it upon the supposition that his

shrewd friend had "jumped" the intervening sites and hit the last one. This was a daring supposition, but he was beginning to feel as if nothing was too difficult for the young Indian to do.

Ra-lo-no followed the trail for several rods, when, rather curiously, it made another abrupt turn, as in the former instance. He paused now and then, and spent several minutes in a deep study of his surroundings, while Arlos, who saw what all this hesitation meant, awaited his action.

The guide used more time than before—so much, indeed, that Arlos became a trifle impatient. The day was wearing away, and he began to fear, despite his high hopes, that another night was to pass without a meeting with his friend.

If the former tramp was a severe one, it was as nothing compared to that which now followed. It surpassed anything that Arlos had ever undertaken.

His saturated garments dried upon his body, and more than once he felt like protesting, but grimly resolved to stand it as long as his companion, who had proved himself more than once his superior in athletic attainments.

They seemed to be climbing or descending all the time. They leaped fissures and crevices, where a slip would have been fatal, sprang across narrow streams, picked their course through winding gorges

and ravines, following repeatedly every turn of the compass, but whither they were going the young paleface had no more idea than if blind.

It was with some depression of spirits that he saw the afternoon drawing to a close without bringing them in sight of his friend, whom he had been confident of greeting long before. Still Arlos held his peace, and sturdily tramped where Ra-lo-no led.

Finally, they drew near the same canyon-like stream which he had essayed to leap in imitation of his guide, only to meet with his startling experience.

Arlos recognized it at a glance, for the similarity was well-nigh perfect. He would have been certain they had struck it at the same point, but for the difference in the width, which was little more than one-half of that which confronted them before.

Both leaped it without trouble, though the Shoshone glanced queerly at his companion, as if uncertain of his ability in that line.

A short distance further on they came to another clump of trees with considerable undergrowth. Ra-lo-no's manner indicated that he expected to strike the trail again, and Arlos peered over his shoulder, hoping to catch sight of his friend or hear his voice. He and Varnum of course had

left their ponies somewhere else and were on foot.

The Shoshone uttered an exclamation. The gathering night made it so dark among the trees that he stooped over to scrutinize the ground. Arlos did the same, but failed to discover any of the signs that had so interested him before.

Ra-lo-no moved hither and thither, but the trees were so few in number that it took but a short time to examine every portion of the grove. Then he straightened up and indulged in another exclamation.

"I see no signs of their having been here," said Arlos to his friend, who instead of smiling looked disappointed.

And that was the trouble with the Shoshone. His face revealed his chagrin. Where he expected to find the two persons, he found none, nor was there any evidence of their ever having been near the place.

The most guarded, careful, and skillful man must stumble at times. Ra-lo-no had made a blunder. By the same course of reasoning which took him to the right spot earlier in the day, he had now been led to the wrong locality. Had he kept to the trail, he might not have been where he was, but he would have been on the right road.

It was a grievous disappointment to Arlos Hayman, for hope had been growing all the time that his body was weakening under the great strain. He had been buoyed up by confidence until the very moment when it all vanished.

CHAPTER XX.

THE MEDICINE MAN.

ARLOS took care that the faithful young guide should not see any censure in his looks or manner. Ra-lo-no was under no obligation to lend his services to this hunt, yet he did so right willingly, and had not spared himself. Though success was deferred, there could be no doubt that it would be attained in the end.

The immediate question with Arlos was as to the next step of his friend. It was so late in the day that he did not think he would try to retrieve his mistake before the morrow.

Tough as was his frame, and remarkable as were his powers of endurance, he must need rest. As for hunger, Arlos had enough for both.

Ra-lo-no rallied from his depression with surprising quickness. He paused, as had become his custom, on the edge of the clump of trees in the open air, where he gained an unobstructed view of the country.

The care with which he studied his surroundings

led Arlos to believe that he had decided to make another effort to find the man and youth in the little time of daylight that remained.

"I'll stick to it as long as he does, for I know he can't keep it up much longer. Keen as are his eyes, they cannot follow a trail at night, and he will soon give it up."

One possibility brought Arlos a slight degree of hope. The guide had made an error in acting upon the supposition that the missing ones had camped at this spot. Possibly they would still do so.

In other words, the theory followed by the guide had brought him to the place in advance of those who would yet spend the night there.

A few minutes' thought, however, took away this prop. Varnum Brown, while hunting for pleasure, would not keep it up after night had come. He must have already gone into camp and therefore would not be here.

The Shoshone moved away with a more deliberate step, though his manner indicated that he had in mind exactly where he wished to go.

"Now, if he fixed upon two camping sites," thought Arlos, following the endless line of speculation, "and the other was not too far off, there would still be a chance of success, but that I fear is too much to expect before the morrow."

Once or twice it struck the paleface that there was something familiar in the objects passed. Unable to understand how this could be, he laid it to a natural coincidence of scenery and surroundings, which was not singular.

Thus they tramped on, the darkness increasing until progress became quite difficult, even for the experienced guide. Arlos was about to propose that they should stop, when the glimmer of a light ahead showed that they were approaching some camp. The explanation of the familiarity of several of the landmarks was that Arlos Hayman had seen them before, having passed them in the morning when leaving the camp of the Shoshones. The light which he observed came from the fires that marked where the party had established their quarters while hunting in this section of the Rocky Mountains.

The return of the two youths seemed to create no more interest than their departure. Ko-mo-mo was not visible, and the others hardly looked up from their various occupations.

Enough of the meat, which was never lacking, had been prepared for the evening meal. Indeed all seem to have partaken, for they were grouped around, smoking their pipes, lolling on the ground, some talking in their grunting, jerky manner, while

others were as grim and silent as if the power of speech were denied them.

Ra-lo-no was at home in every sense of the word. He first visited the tepee, perhaps to report to his father. When he emerged, he was accompanied by his sister, who helped to bring the broiled venison to their guest and place it before him.

She was smiling and in good spirits, and the brother and sister had much to say to each other.

Arlos was thoroughly tired. Nearly the whole day had been spent in tramping over the rough face of the country, the labor, as I have shown, having been for a great deal of the time of the severest nature.

When he stretched out on the blanket again furnished him he felt as if he would not wish to bestir himself for a week to come.

But he was not left to himself. He had lain but a few minutes when he was disturbed by an extraordinary occurrence.

One of the warriors drew aside the flap of the tepee and fastened it in place, so that a glimpse of the interior could be obtained, as revealed by the glare of the campfire. While the youth, lying on his side, was peering curiously into the gloomy structure, the warrior that had opened the door turned and beckoned to the one who, while acting

as sentinel the previous night, had used him so roughly.

Immediately the two entered the structure, quickly reappearing with the form of another warrior borne between them.

One glance at the face of the patient, as well as the tender manner in which he was handled, showed that he was either mortally ill or was suffering from a grievous injury.

He was gently deposited on the ground in a half-sitting posture, but he turned his head away, as if he had lost all interest in the proceedings. One of the attendants, who had helped bring him to the spot, leaned over and looked into his drawn countenance. The other respectfully drew back and silently watched the scene.

At this moment, when a hush rested upon all, the medicine man of the tribe emerged from the tepee and slowly walked into the open space in front of the sufferer. He was fantastically arrayed, with protruding feathers and the horns of a buffalo amid his dangling hair. His trousers were loose and ornamented with flapping fringes, and his feet were bare.

Thrown into relief against the burning fagots behind him, he formed a weird and striking figure, made more so by his grotesque performances.

He began a strange, swaying dance, swinging his arms hither and thither, and leaping lightly from place to place, his odd capering at times suggesting that he had stepped upon a live coal. With the first essay he began a low, monotonous chant to which his hopping feet kept time.

This was Wau-mat-mo, the great medicine man of the Shoshones, who was about to exorcise the evil spirit that had taken possession of the warrior. In the conflict of the previous day, which ended the career of Jim Wagram, this buck had received a wound which brought him nigh unto death's door.

His friends were not averse to applying their rude medical knowledge, in the form of bitter drinks and medicinal herbs. His rugged frame and powerful constitution were of great aid, but his condition remained so serious that the services of the medicine man were summoned as a last resort to carry him over the crisis.

But for the presence of impending death, Arlos would have smiled at the absurd antics of Wau-mat-mo, which grew more vigorous as the minutes passed. His chant held the same even monotone, but his gestures became violent.

In the light of the campfire the perspiration shone on his face and the upper part of his body.

The violent exertion was beginning to tell, even on so indurate a warrior as the medicine man.

Arlos had taken his position among the spectators, where he maintained the same grave expression he saw on their countenances. Wearying of looking at the cavortings of the sorcerer, he fixed his gaze upon the subject of them.

The buck who had been kneeling near his head gently rose and stepped back among the group, leaving the space clear. For a long time the sufferer lay with his face turned away from the medicine man, his dull, lack-luster eyes showing no interest in the incantations.

Suddenly, however, the patient moved his head, bringing it back so as to give him a view of Wau-mat-mo. For the first time, the poor fellow began to feel a faint interest in the proceedings.

This interest deepened. He watched the other with a more persistent gaze. The sufferer's hands moved, and he partly flung aside the blanket that lay across the lower part of his body. The emotion of the spectators was intense. They seemed hardly to breathe, and glanced from the sufferer to the medicine man and then back again.

The feelings of Arlos were scarcely less wrought upon. There certainly was a change in the condition of the Indian. Could it be he was mending?

Such seemed the fact, for the power of imagination over the body is well known, even among those who lay claim to civilization.

Superb as is the self-control of the American Indian, every one of the group gave a start and uttered a suppressed exclamation, when the patient deliberately rose to his feet, gathered up the blanket, and carrying it in one hand, walked with dignity to the tepee, stooped, entered, and passed from view.

It looked like a miracle. The warriors accepted it as another proof of the supernatural power of Wau-mat-mo, their medicine man, before whom they were ready to fall down and worship.

With the withdrawal of the wounded warrior, the sorcerer abruptly ceased his gymnastics, and with the same stately tread, followed the patient into the tepee, where he lowered the flap and shut out all intrusion.

The whole performance had a peculiar interest to Arlos Hayman, and at any other time would have caused much speculation and entertainment; but there is no resisting the demands of weary nature, and hardly had the hush once more fallen upon the camp, when he closed his eyes in refreshing slumber which was not broken until the sun was again shining in the heavens.

With the memory of the previous night's exhibi-

tion still vivid, he was curious as to the permanence of the effects of the incantations of Wau-mat-mo. His curiosity was gratified, for, while Ra-lo-no was preparing the morning meal, the wounded warrior emerged from the tepee and moved about among his friends.

He walked several rods in an irregular circle which took in the extent of the camp, and then returned and sat down on his blanket near Arlos, who studied his countenance with close attention.

That he was still weak and in pain was certain, for the most vivid imagination cannot work an actual miracle, but his self-control was superb. It was equally certain that he had passed the crisis and was now beyond danger.

Several warriors approached him, and a few words were uttered. Wau-mat-mo did not appear. Probably he felt himself too exalted, and too superior to those of common clay to mingle freely with them.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SIGNAL FIRE.

THE feeling was strong upon Arlos Hayman that a few hours were to bring the crisis in his hunt for his friend Dolph Bushkirk. He did not see how it could be otherwise; for it was certain they were close upon him the previous day, and would have found the young man but for the single blunder of Ra-lo-no, made too late to be retrieved.

The Shoshone could not repeat a mistake of that nature.

For a long time the dusky guide seemed to proceed without any definite purpose. Arlos could not recall that they had passed over any portion of the ground on their previous tramp, and he supposed his friend was searching for the trail he had lost.

Probably two hours went by in this manner, the traveling being of the roughest nature. Ra-lo-no had not spoken or halted, but pushed on with the

same steady, tireless gait that he seemed capable of maintaining for days without fatigue.

Suddenly he made one of his abrupt halts, and uttered the exclamation with which Arlos was becoming familiar, and which he knew was the announcement that his guide had made some interesting discovery.

By way of explanation to the paleface, who stepped up beside him, the Shoshone extended his hand toward a point several hundred yards distant.

Arlos saw only a mass of jumbled rocks and stunted pines, sights which never seemed absent from one's field of vision in that part of the world.

Failing to note anything that warranted the interest of his guide, Arlos intimated the fact as best he could. The Shoshone smiled and drew his friend toward him.

Then he leveled his rifle, sighted it carefully, and raising his head held the gun motionless and invited Arlos to squint along the barrel.

He did so and then all became clear. A little wisp of vapor, so fine as to be almost impalpable, was filtering through the tops of the pines.

Arlos nodded. He understood it now. They had approached another spot where a campfire had been burning some time before. Ra-lo-no smiled and walked on.

The result was pleasing and yet in a certain sense exasperating. Arlos could no longer doubt that they were close upon his friend, and yet Dolph was out of range, nor did he know where to turn to find him.

The ashes on being kicked apart revealed a number of glowing embers. There were the bones of some game cast aside after the campers had cleaned them of their meat; and once again Arlos picked up a piece of envelope on which was the business address of Dolph Bushkirk's father.

He concluded that his friend must be pretty well supplied with that sort of fuel.

The tantalizing feature of the business was that Dolph and his guide had spent the previous night on this spot. There could be no question as to that; and since it was still early in the forenoon, they were not far away, but in what direction he should turn to find them he had not the remotest idea. That must be solved by the young Shoshone.

Arlos, however, devoted several minutes to studying the ground. In the immediate neighborhood of the fire the footprints were plain. He even believed he could recognize the spot where the companions had spread their blankets, as well as the positions occupied by each while acting as sentinel, but that was all.

On the margin of a clump of trees he was at sea as to the course taken by the two who had left but a short time before.

It seemed to Arlos that if he shouted Dolph must hear him, yet he did not dare do that without the consent of Ra-lo-no, for it might interfere with his plans. He tried to ask for such permission, but the achievement was beyond his skill in the sign language upon which he had to depend.

He strove hard, but the blank expression on the face of the Shoshone showed that he caught no idea of his meaning; nor could Arlos make it any clearer, so he gave over the attempt.

Ra-lo-no examined the ground, his companion trying in vain to make out what it was he saw. Then the guide moved off, glancing down so frequently as to leave no doubt that he was following the trail, instead of relying upon a theory as in the former instance.

"He won't make any mistake this time," was Arlos' conclusion.

But the trailing of a person or two persons is a more difficult task than the youth had suspected. Had they been traveling through the woods, where the rumpled leaves showed, or across the open prairie, on which the lightest foot makes an impression, the Shoshone never would have been at

fault; but enough has been told to indicate the nature of the ground, over which they made their way.

In many places the path led for a considerable distance across the flinty surface of rocks and boulders, where the hunters never once touched the earth. Had Dolph Bushkirk and Varnum Brown wished to hide their trail, they might have done so beyond the possibility of the keen-eyed Shoshone finding it. But they could have no such thought. They were hunting as the inclination led them, careless of where they placed their feet, so long as they did not place them in any dangerous spot.

Thus Ra-lo-no found himself forced in many instances to fall back on the plan of the day before. Where the footprints vanished on the surface of a series of rocks, he halted, glanced ahead, and then decided what course had been taken by the hunters.

In these cases, however, he did not grope for any distance. On the previous day, he had "cut across lots" without any attempt to keep the trail; now he clung to it, whenever and as long as it was possible to do so.

His acumen saved him from making another blunder. When he stopped, he looked ahead and around, and made up his mind as to the route fol-

lowed by the others, and, as I have said, he was right in each instance. Upon striking solid earth again, he invariably came upon the impression which showed where Brown and his friend had again placed their feet.

“At any rate they will rest at noon, and then we shall overtake them,” Arlos told himself.

Arlos was watching his guide a few paces in front, when he observed in a direct line with him, and less than a fourth of a mile distant, the smoke of another campfire. It was on more elevated ground than the others, and in such plain view that the Shoshone remained motionless for several minutes with his eyes fixed upon it.

At first there was nothing noticeable in its appearance. It was simply a distinct column of dark-colored vapor, climbing into the sky from among a mass of rocks. He had seen the same so often since entering this section that he would have thought nothing of it but for its position in a line with the trail they were following.

The natural suspicion was that it had been kindled by Brown and Bushkirk, and it is probable that the same thought occurred to the Shoshone, for he paused longer than usual while watching the vapor.

All at once it took upon itself a singular appearance. The smoke, which had been ascending in a

regular, pointed line, growing thinner toward the top as it dissolved in the clear air, now became broken, and resembled puffs emitted from the mouth of a piece of ordnance.

This continued until the composition of the entire column had become changed in the same curious manner.

The Shoshone was mystified. He had never seen anything of the kind, or, if he had, failed to read its meaning. It was clear that the peculiar conformation of the vapor was not due to itself. The man or men who had started the fire must have brought about the unnatural action of the smoke.

Suddenly the truth flashed upon Arlos Hayman. This was the very signal which Budd Slogan had warned him to be on the lookout for, instead of the three reports of his rifle, which had served them until now.

The fire had been started by Budd, who was summoning his young friend to his side to receive the important tidings he had for him.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE GOLD HUNTERS.

WE must now give our attention for awhile to the movements of Budd Slogan.

A man who had spent the life of this guide and hunter, coming in contact with the most reckless characters on the frontier, where the only law is that of might, sees many instances when his anger is roused; but it may be doubted whether Budd was ever more furious than when he made the discovery that the bridles, saddles, minor articles, everything in fact, except what he and Arlos Hayman happened to have with them, had been stolen.

Had the property been taken by Indians, or by those against whom he was waging hostilities, his resentment would not have been so intense; but he knew that Val Harper and his party were the thieves.

He had not mentioned one fact to his young friend, when the two were discussing the outlaws. Only a short time before, Budd Slogan had inter-

ferred in Deadwood in behalf of Harper, when but for such interference he would not have lived five minutes. And this was the scoundrel's gratitude!

It was in the darkness of night that Budd strode from the camp, bent on recovering his property and bringing the criminals to account.

Had the sun been shining he might have made his hunt effective from the first, for it would not have taken him long to find trace of the guilty ones, but so long as the gloom lasted he must in some measure act upon the plan of Ra-lo-no and push forward in accordance with the best theory he could form.

Although Budd had seen several of the outlaws, and in fact knew pretty much all about them, he did not know where they made their camp, nor would he have sought to learn but for this outrage. He could make his way back to the grove where the fierce encounter took place, but he would pick up no information there.

He must keep moving, however, or his anger would master him.

He recalled that when he last saw the ponies, they were eating their way, as may be said, up the valley, and, if undisturbed, would be in the neighborhood of the falls near which the young Shoshone had shot the antelope.

Of course they were not there, but he proceeded thither and then turned to the right, picking his course through the gloom as best he could, sometimes stumbling, climbing over obstructions, leaping yawning crevices which ought to have checked him, but all the time pushing onward, little caring whither he went so long as he went somewhere.

Through the solemn stillness stole the soft murmur of the waterfall, growing fainter as his footsteps receded. Then the night was pierced by the long, wavering howl of the mountain wolf, calling to some comrade, or hunting for a victim for its rapacious appetite.

Once Budd fancied he heard the shout of a man, and stopped abruptly. It was not repeated, nor could he decide the point whence it came, so he pressed on.

He had no hope of coming upon anything that would help him in the search before the following morning. But the impulse which would not permit him to sit down in idleness kept him moving without any sensible fatigue.

Suddenly he caught the glimmer of a campfire. He stopped with a throb of awakened interest.

Could it be that fortune had led him to the right spot? Was he to be given the means of squaring

accounts without the tedious delay against which his soul rebelled.

But Budd was too much of a veteran to count upon easy success when all the probabilities were against it. To whomsoever this camp belonged, either white or red men, he needed not to be told that a cat-like vigilance was maintained. Sentinels were on duty and it would be hardly possible for a serpent to glide over the ground without detection.

The guide therefore called all his skill into play. If he should be discovered, the first notice was likely to be a rifle shot. It is not the custom on the frontier for a sentinel to challenge intruders and wait for the password. He fires first and makes his investigations afterward.

The glow of the fire was so faint and distant that he could learn nothing about it without a closer approach, which he proceeded to make in the highest style of the art.

Crouching down until he seemed to be lying almost on his face, he advanced inch by inch, and with a tardiness which at times showed no progress at all. His eyes were not likely to be of any help for a while, and he depended wholly on his sense of hearing.

That he failed to note any sound he accepted as no proof that he was not in the immediate vicinity

of an enemy. The outlaws, after their scrimmage with the Shoshones, would exercise the same alertness in guarding against surprise, and it would be hard even for a veteran warrior to steal undetected within striking distance.

He judged that he had crossed one half the intervening space, when a shadow flitted between him and the campfire. The glimpse was too brief for him to see it clearly.

It was as if a bush had been swung before his eyes. He knew, however, that it was not a bush but a person.

Lying flat on the ground, intently peering into the gloom, he observed it a second time. The head and shoulders of some one were shown against the firelight. He had been crouching, but not so low as Budd, and now straightened up, disclosing the upper part of his person.

He was standing still, as if listening, though the hunter was certain that he had not betrayed himself by any sound, however faint.

But the sentinel might be listening for a sound which had not yet been made. Aware of this, Budd retained his prone position, not stirring a muscle and hardly permitting himself to breathe.

Probably five minutes passed, when a confused noise came from some point on the other side of

the camp. The hunter could not divine its nature, but it was as if some person or animal were stamping on the ground.

The sentinel in front of Budd was quick to hear it and did that which no sentinel should do, deserted his post, moving quickly toward the fire and also in the direction of the puzzling sounds.

This left a portion of the camp unguarded, and Budd quietly stole far enough forward to observe what was going on.

To his surprise, by the increasing glare of the campfire, he recognized Ra lo-no, the young Shoshone, who had been acting as sentinel on the side where Budd had tried to approach the camp unobserved. Arlos Hayman and the other Indian, whom Budd had seen earlier in the day in the grove, were the remaining individuals that made up the curious scene.

The hunter was puzzled at first, but a minute's observation of the picture and a little reflection told the story. Arlos had been captured while approaching the camp from another direction, but, now that his identity was known, he was in no danger.

"So the youngster went off on a little tramp of his own," thought Budd, smiling; "he must have stumbled onto this 'ere camp as I done, which the same was a lucky thing for the aforesaid youngster."

He's among friends, and I needn't think about him till I get through with t'other chaps."

Having seen all that he cared to see, the guide carefully withdrew from the locality, without his presence being suspected by any of the Shoshones, who maintained the keenest kind of a watch for intruders.

It was not to be supposed that Val Harper and his men were in the neighborhood, for the taste which they had received of the Shoshones would make them chary about molesting the Indians further. He must look for them elsewhere.

Nearly all that remained of the night was passed by the guide in groping among the rocks, bowlders, and wild places. Once he escaped by a hair's breadth from tumbling over a precipice several hundred feet deep.

By that time he had begun to feel the fatigue of his severe work, so, hunting out a secluded spot, he lay down and slept until daylight. He ran some risk in doing this, but he was in the mood to take almost any chances. Fortunately he was not disturbed, and gained the rest needed even by his hardened frame.

"I'm glad of one thing," reflected the hunter, as he addressed himself to the work of the day, "and that is that I haven't that younker with me. If I

had, he would be so hungry by this time that he'd be ready to eat his shoes. No business could be 'tended to till he had eat one of his big meals. I'm just as hungry as him, but I can stand it, and I don't lose any time huntin' fur game; yes," he grimly added, "I'm huntin' fur game, but it ain't the kind the younker would want to meet."

It was clear that if Val Harper and his party had spent the night in the vicinity, they must have had some sort of fire. Accordingly, the first thing Budd did was to study every visible portion of the sky for signs of the same.

He quickly saw that for which he was looking. Barely half a mile distant, was the telltale smoke, making its way into the clear sky, from a clump of pines. The woodcraft of the guide revealed the interesting fact that the spot was close to the scene of the conflict between the Shoshones and the three members of Val Harper's gang.

"I shouldn't think they would be partial to that latitude," muttered Budd, "and it may be that it ain't them after all; howsumever, I'll soon find out."

He used considerable care in going forward, though he did not believe himself in much danger of being seen by any one. A further advance made known the curious fact that the camp which he

was approaching was in the same clump of trees in which the fight had taken place.

He was surprised, for it was not clear why this should be the case. He knew the camp did not belong to the Shoshones, for they were a long way off. They appreciated the truth that in union is strength, and, though they might scatter and separate during the day for the purpose of hunting, every one of them would be together when night came.

It would not be supposed that Val Harper or any of his men would spend the hours so near the scene of their repulse, nor indeed would any one else knowing the circumstances.

Near the edge of the small grove of trees, Budd came in sight of the campfire. It was burning brightly, but not a soul was near it. The sound of voices, however, showed there were men somewhere in the grove, and he pushed on.

A few minutes later he came upon a striking scene.

Beside the spot where had lain the lifeless body of Jim Walgram was a newly-made grave, into which it had been lowered. At the head of the grave a small wooden cross was set in the ground; at the foot knelt a bareheaded man, and on one side knelt another whose head was also bared.

Between these, and a little back, stood a third man, of strong and sturdy build, his head uncovered, while he leaned upon a peculiar, two-pronged pick. The shovel with which the grave had been dug lay near the edge of the excavation.

The man kneeling at the head of the grave, and who was of slighter build than the others, was praying. Budd saw his lips moving and heard his murmured words, his countenance showing a solemn and reverential demeanor.

Even the hardened hunter, who was little used to such occurrences, was impressed by the scene. One glance was sufficient to tell him that none of the three men was a member of Val Harper's party. They were strangers in the place.

The hunter had no wish to intrude upon the men, whom he respected for what they were doing. The one laid away to rest was undeserving of consideration, but it was charity to give it to him; and without hunting for particulars, and probably caring nothing for them, these strangers had done their duty.

The prayer finished, the man who had offered it rose to his feet, replaced his hat, and began shoveling dirt into the grave. His companions silently watched him until the hollow was filled up. The mound that rose above the level ground was

neatly smoothed off, and the kind work was completed.

The three walked thoughtfully back to their campfire and sat down. They did little talking, acting as if the spell of the sad occasion was still upon them. One began stirring the fire preparatory to cooking their breakfast.

There was no need of hesitation, and Budd Slogan, much impressed in favor of the three strangers, walked forward and bade them good morning. They looked at him curiously as he came up, but returned his salutation with a courtesy which left no doubt in his mind of his welcome.

Making known his name and the fact that he had accompanied a young friend on a hunting excursion to this part of the country, Budd added :

“May I make bold to ask who you folks might be?”

“No honest man should be afraid to tell his name and business,” replied the leader of the party, who was the sturdy member that kept his feet during the prayer; “my name is Wildman, the gentleman on my right is Mr. Barnes, and the one on my left Porter.”

Each rose to his feet and shook Budd’s hand, expressing his pleasure at making his acquaintance.

"We are on the point of eating; you haven't breakfasted?"

"Not yet."

"We shall be fortunate then in having your company; sit down there and use your knife as we do. We have no water handy, but it isn't far off, and we can drink when we feel like it."

While they were eating, Mr. Wildman continued:

"We stayed here last night, never dreaming that that dead body lay so near us till Mr. Porter was moving around this morning and stumbled over it. I saw the man had been shot, but I wondered how it came about."

"I kin tell you," replied Budd, who thereupon related the story of the fight between the outlaws and the Shoshones.

"Then the man had no one to blame but himself. Still, I'm glad we were able to put him under the ground and cover him up. We shall all need a similar service for ourselves some day."

"Are you tramping round the country looking for people to plant?" asked Budd.

"Why do you ask that question?" inquired Wildman in turn, displeased with the inquiry.

"No offense; I observe that you carry the tools with you, which most people in these parts don't do."

The other smiled.

"It does look a little odd, I suppose; but we are gold hunters."

"Gold hunters!" repeated Budd in amazement; "there ain't no gold in this part of the Rocky Mountains."

"We are beginning to think so, though my friends and myself held different opinions until a few days ago."

"What put the idea in your heads that you would find the yaller stuff in Middle Park?"

Wildman looked into the face of his companions, and all three blushed and smiled.

"Shall I tell him, boys?" he asked.

"Yes, out with it," replied Porter; "we haven't committed any crime."

"Well, you will think us foolish, but Mr. Barnes there had a dream three nights in succession that at the base of a certain mountain in Middle Park was a rich lead of genuine gold."

"Dunno as there was anything foolish about his dreaming the same, but it was infernally foolish for you to b'lieve the dream that fur to come out here prospecting on the strength of it."

"Well, Porter had precisely the same dream only a few nights after Barnes; how about that?" inquired Wildman, with a smile.

Budd shook his head.

"Don't make no difference if all your grandfathers and grandmothers and cousins and aunts had the dream—there warn't nothing in it."

"I agree with you; but I came upon a man who described the spot to us, and said he knew there was gold there."

"That's different," remarked Budd, beginning to show interest in the narration, "provided the man warn't lying to you."

Wildman laughed.

"It is well you put in that proviso, Mr. Slogan. A man in Denver came to me one day, some weeks ago, and told me he knew of a certain mountain in Middle Park where there was enough gold to make a hundred men so rich they wouldn't know what to do with their money. I paid little attention to him, though he related an interesting story of how he and three others were besieged by a hundred Indians, several years since, whom they stood off for a week. It was in digging up ground and overturning stones and small bowlders for their little fort that they made the discovery.

"Still I thought he was yarning, and would have paid no more attention to him had he not described the identical mountain which Barnes and Porter had seen in their dreams. That set me to thinking.

I questioned him closely, and when I found that his story didn't vary a hair's breadth from theirs, why I felt like believing it. He assured me that he hadn't let any one else know about it and pledged himself not to do so if I would pay him a hundred dollars."

"Which the same you done, and I don't blame you," remarked Budd Slogan.

"When I proposed to Porter and Barnes that we should come out to Middle Park and prospect they were quite willing. I didn't let them know anything of the story I had heard, but allowed them to think it was their dreams that influenced me. If I had had sense enough to explain everything we never would have come on this tomfool errand."

"How's that?"

"Why, that same fellow had made the acquaintance of Porter and Barnes some days before, and in talking about dreams he got the story from them. They had no idea of acting on their dream, so they didn't hesitate to let him know all about it. He was a cunning rogue, for he drew out all he wanted, and then worked his scheme on me.

"I never suspected anything until after we had spent a week in prospecting and digging. Then, when my friends rallied me, I tried to justify myself by relating the story and explaining the real

reason why I expected to find gold here. The whole thing proved to be a fraud. We found a mountain, after a long search, which corresponded with the one my friends saw in their sleep, and we began digging. We kept it up for a week, till finally the hour came when we stopped, looked into one another's faces, and broke into laughter. Then we piled our luggage on the backs of our animals and started home. We are thus far on the road. I think we have had enough of gold-hunting in Middle Park to answer for the rest of our lives."

"I observe you spoke of horses," remarked Budd, "but I haven't seen none of 'em."

"No; as if our disappointment was not enough, they were stolen from us."

"How many had you?"

"Only three; we brought little baggage with us."

"When was they stole?"

"We left them in a hollow, or small valley, where there was plenty of grass and water; the place isn't far from here. Barnes and Porter went to the spot yesterday morning, but they were gone, as were the saddles and bridles which we had *cached* in the rocks."

"Do you know who took 'em?"

"A large party of Indians is in the neighborhood—too large for us to molest. It looks as if we shall

have to tramp to the nearest station on the Union Pacific. Fortunately we have enough money to pay our fares home."

"Your animals warn't stole by Injins," said the guide; "I know the party, which the same is them that give Jim Wagram, that you planted, his last sickness. They're Shoshones and their honest. The men that stole your horses is the gang that Jim belonged to; Val Harper, one of the worst men this side of the Mississippi, is at their head. It was him that persuaded two of his men to j'in him in an attack on the redskins, when they got the worst of it. They've stole the two ponies belonging to me and the younker that came with me; likewise the saddles and bridles and sich things. I've set out to get them animals back and I'm going to do it."

There could be no mistaking the earnestness of this declaration. With the recurring memory of the outrage, all of Budd Slogan's overwhelming anger returned. He leaped to his feet with flashing eyes, and glared right and left, as if eager for a sight of the men who had made him the victim of this wrong.

Wildman looked at him with a curious expression on his face.

"Now if it turns out that you are right—and there is no reason why it shouldn't—what is to pre-

vent our going into the business as full partners on the ground floor with you?"

"That hits me right," was the pleased answer of Budd; "I expected you to say them words, or something meaning the same, and if you hadn't I'd set you down as a pack of cowards that deserve your loss."

"What do you say, boys?" asked the leader, turning to his companions, whose interest in the affair was as deep as his own.

"The information that Mr. Slogan has given leaves no other course open," was the reply of Barnes; "you know I have been in favor of an effort against the Indians, even though they so much outnumber us."

Porter nodded his head, adding:

"Nothing will suit me better. The dream business, and the trick played on us by that rogue in Denver, make me feel as if we must not go home without making a demonstration of some kind."

"That settles it!" remarked Budd, highly satisfied. "I observe likewise, as aforesaid, that each of you has a ch'ice Winchester of the best brand."

"We would hardly venture into this part of the Union," said Wildman, "without being well provided in that respect. We have rifles and revolvers, and though it may not be becoming in me to say it,

we don't need to be taught how to use them. Do you know how many outlaws there are?"

"There's something queer about 'em ; a few days ago there was seven or maybe more ; but I reckon there's been a quarrel and split among 'em ; for so fur as I've been able to larn, only three was in these parts, and you've planted one of 'em, so there's but two left. That's only my impression, howsum-ever ; there may be more, but what's the odds any way ?"

"Nothing, only it must affect our way of going about the work. Is it not probable that, since these men have stolen five horses at least, and that it was done more than twenty-four hours ago, they may have started for home and may be miles on the road at this very hour?"

This contingency had presented itself to Budd Slogan more than once. In fact, it was one of the reasons why he showed such great haste in hunting the thieves. If Val Harper and his companions had gone eastward, they were already so far on the way that it was useless to follow them.

"I don't deny that it may be as you say, and if it is, the jig's up; but that is one of them things we've got to find out for ourselves, and we'll do it afore the sun goes down."

"It occurs to me," observed Wildman, who

showed himself to be an unusually intelligent man, "that the most promising course is to go down the valley to the trail which they would be likely to follow. If we see no signs of their having preceded us, we may conclude that they are still in the mountains. We can then work back with the certainty either of meeting them or coming upon their camp, and one is as much in our favor as the other."

"Them's sensible words," was the comment of Budd Slogan ; "there couldn't be a better plan than yours and we'll foller it now."

CHAPTER XXIII.

ALL READY.

THERE was no cause for any delay. The gold-hunters left shovel, picks, and all digging implements behind, carrying only their weapons and a few trifling articles which were strapped in bundles and slung across their shoulders. They showed no signs of timidity or hesitation; their coolness, deliberation, and readiness bespoke the staying qualities which a leader in a desperate enterprise loves to see in his followers.

Naturally Budd Slogan took the lead, Wildman coming next, the four emerging from the grove in Indian file. In the clear air there was a minute's halt, while the eyes of all swept the sky for signs of the outlaws.

Nothing was observed that could give them the clew they sought, and the tramp was continued in the direction of the valley where Budd had turned the animals loose.

The party did not lose sight of one fact which was not a comforting one; it would take several days to examine the outlets, by any one of which the criminals could leave the region. The utmost the pursuers could hope to do was to investigate the places where they seemed most likely to find traces of them.

The first thing done was to make as thorough an inspection as possible of the trail by which Budd and Arlos Hayman had entered the section. This was so broad that a number of hours passed before it was completed to the satisfaction of the guide.

The truth was established that no horseman had gone out of the mountains by that route for a number of days past.

"That is," explained Budd, "unless they backed their animals out, which the same I don't think likely they done, being as they must have been in a hurry."

It will be understood how perfectly the veteran hunter did his work, when it is stated that, despite the disturbances that took place afterward, he traced the trail of the ponies ridden by Arlos and himself when entering the mountains several days before, but, as he stated, failed to discover any footprints leading outward.

All that was proved by this was that the men

whom they were seeking had not left by that route. They had either taken another or were still among the mountains.

Budd now decided to examine another pass, or rather portion of a pass, which lay a little distance to the south. This would consume most of what was left of the day, but he felt that it ought to be done. Although, as shown, such examination could not decide beyond peradventure the actual state of affairs, it was agreed to act upon the theory that if the outlaws had not left by that route they had not left at all, but were still where they could be found.

If they had gone they were too far off to be pursued by any party on foot. If they were in the mountains the four could afford to be deliberate in making their search for them.

With the same thoroughness as before Budd Slogan inspected the second outlet, and with a similar result.

"I'm purty sartin of one thing," he said when the work was finished: "the men that we want is still behind us. They don't fancy that any of 'em as has had their animals stole is going to make a fuss over it, and which the same being the case, they ain't in any hurry to make it easier fur the law officers to lay hands on 'em."

"What a pity we could not have learned this

truth earlier in the day," remarked Wildman, noting that the shadows of coming night were closing round them; "we can't accomplish much before to-morrow."

"It doesn't look as if we kin, but—what's that?"

To the astonishment of the four, while they were discussing matters, four horsemen appeared.

They were approaching in Indian file from the direction of the mountains, their animals on a walk. One searching glance of Budd Slogan identified them as members of Val Harper's party. All wore slouch hats, were muscular, brawny, bearded, and "well heeled."

When they came in sight, it was from behind a pile of rocks, some two hundred yards distant, their horses headed so that a meeting with the footmen was inevitable, unless the outlaws made a decided change of course.

"That's some of 'em," remarked Budd in an undertone; "make sartin that your shootin' irons is ready; they're a bad lot."

"Is Val Harper among them?" inquired Wildman.

"I'm purty sartin he isn't; his place would be at the head, and the man there ain't him. I can't make out the faces of the two at the rear; "no," suddenly added the guide, "he ain't with 'em."

The horsemen of course had been equally quick

to observe the four men standing together a short distance away. The former showed no timidity, but rode forward with their animals at the same deliberate gait.

Budd Slogan acted upon a sudden thought. He had recognized the leader of the party as Dave Glascoe, a desperate man, whom he knew in Santa Fé years before. Budd decided to have a talk with him and his companions without the presence of the gold-hunters. It would thus be easier to obtain the information he wanted.

"Wait for me," he said, moving off at a brisk walk toward the horsemen, who watched him closely, as he drew near.

"Hello, Dave!" called Budd, while several rods distant, making the military salute he had learned in the army; "stop a minute, won't you?"

"I don't know whether I will or won't," growled the other, who nevertheless reined up his horse, the others doing the same.

Budd had noticed that neither his pony nor that of Arlos Hayman was with the other party. As Wildman announced that he saw none of their animals either, the guide suspected that Glascoe and his companions had quarreled with Val Harper and left him. At any rate, he now acted upon this supposition.

Glascoe had recognized his old acquaintance, but was surly, and showed no pleasure at meeting him. His answers were in monosyllables, but he gradually thawed under the infectious good nature of Budd, who exerted himself to draw the other out.

When this had been done by recalling some of their old adventures and experiences, the guide came to the point.

"Dave, I'm looking for Val Harper; do you know where he is?"

"Yes," replied the horseman with an expletive; "it won't do for him and me to meet."

"There'll be trouble when I see him."

"I'm glad to hear it; what's the row?"

"He's got some horseflesh that belongs to me."

"Shouldn't wonder; he and Bill Goodwin haven't been doing much else since they've been into the mountains. You see, it's their business, and when their eyes light on an animal with four legs their fingers itch till they git him."

"How many has he stole since he's been here?"

"Five."

"And they all b'long to friends of mine."

"And you want to find him?"

"I'm bound to do it if I have to hunt a month."

"You needn't do that. We fellers had trouble with him. It come purty near to a fight, but Val

flunked ; so we pulled out and left him alone. You understand we've got to look out for ourselves," added Glascoe with a grin.

"Of course ; I've nothing to do with that. Can you tell me where I'll find him and Goodwin?"

"We left 'em back yonder, not fur from the wood where they had the fight with the Shoshones and Jim Wagram passed in his checks. I can't tell the exact spot, for I don't s'pose they'll keep in one place, but they're getting ready to pull out. I think they'll leave to-morrow or next day."

"All right ; they kin go as soon as they please after I've settled with 'em."

"Is that all?"

"That's all ; good luck to you."

"The same to you ; s'long."

They saluted as before, and the horsemen rode on. Before they had disappeared, Budd Slogan rejoined his friends.

"Come boys ; I've as good as struck their trail. You're ready, ain't you?"

"Ready and waiting," replied Wildman, his companions nodding their heads to indicate that there was no disagreement on that point.

And yet, despite the promising outlook, the night came and passed without the discovery of Harper and Goodwin, who had made a change of quarters.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CONCLUSION.

ARLOS HAYMAN could not suppress an exclamation of delight when he recognized the signal-fire of his old friend Budd Slogan. His actions and gestures indeed were so expressive that Ra-lo-no, who watched him closely with an amused grin for a few minutes, read what it all meant. He nodded his head and started at a rapid walk in the direction of the waving smoke, Arlos keeping by his side instead of following at his heels as was his custom.

But a terrifying interruption came within the next five minutes. From behind a craggy rock on their right, a rasping voice called the most startling order that ever strikes a person's ears in the West:

“Hands up! *manos a ribas!*!”

The last three words are Spanish, meaning the same as the first two. They were uttered for the benefit of the Shoshone, who showed he understood them by instantly dropping his rifle and elevating

both hands. Arlos Hayman was hardly a second behind him in doing the same thing.

Turning their affrighted gaze toward the point whence the command had come, they saw the rifle-barrel of a Winchester leveled at them, and at the stock were the slouch hat, the bearded face, and the gleaming eyes of Val Harper, who certainly "had the drop" on them.

The fact that one man had thus caught the youths off their guard caused Ra-lo-no to glance down at his rifle, lying at his feet. There can be little doubt that he would have made a lightning-like attempt to regain it, but for a second voice which came from the rear of where he stood:

"None of that, redskin! We've got you dead to rights—has Val and me."

And Bill Goodwin rose from behind a smaller boulder, grinning, and with his weapon also aimed.

"Wal, Val, what's to be done with these two catamounts," he called to his companion.

Before replying, the miscreant, still holding his weapon ready for instant use, took a couple of steps toward the two prisoners.

"Pick up them guns, first, Bill; I wouldn't trust that Shoshone wildcat fur a second."

"Nor would I either," remarked Goodwin, who

lost no time in gathering up the rifles, after which he recoiled a step and grinned.

"You kin stop reachin' fur the stars now," said Val Harper, "though you may have a pistol or two about you, but it don't matter."

"What do you mean by stopping us in this manner?" demanded Arlos, showing more courage than was really in his heart; "we have done you no harm, and we have friends that will prevent your harming us."

"You have, eh?" sneered Val Harper. "Wal, they'd better show up purty soon or they'll be too late. Them Shoshones are a good distance off, and as fur Budd Slogan, I'd like to have him show up now!"

And the desperado glared around as if really anxious to see the man whom he hated, for the reason perhaps that the man had proved himself his friend.

Ra-lo-no deliberately retreated to the bowlder from behind which Goodwin had emerged, and sat down. It was a cool proceeding, but seeing there no objection made to it, Arlos did the same.

Goodwin had placed the captured guns against the other rock, so they were beyond the reach of either of the prisoners, who were thus sitting while their captors stood triumphant in front of them.

The Shoshone made no attempt to speak, but his companion believed the only hope for them was to frighten the two desperadoes from carrying out their dreadful intentions.

"They may not be in this spot at this moment," he said, "but they soon will be, and if you harm a hair of our heads, your lives will pay for it!"

Val Harper laughed as if it were all a good joke.

"Do you hear that, Bill? Budd Slogan will wipe you and me out if we don't take off our hats to these chaps and step out of their path when they're coming our way. Wal, wal, wal!"

"I s'pose Budd can travel on foot faster than we kin on the back of his hoss and yours too, younker," observed Goodwin, referring to their recent exploit in the thieving line by which Arlos and his friend had lost their animals.

"He will travel fast enough to overtake you, Val Harper! You know what he is when he is your friend; you will soon learn what he is when an enemy!"

"You can talk big when we let you talk, but you've chinned 'bout long 'nough."

It was at this moment that the Shoshone made a slight but singular movement. He was in Arlos' field of vision, and he saw him slant his head slightly.

He had observed the same thing before and learned its meaning; the Indian had caught some sound, though the ear of the white youth failed to detect anything, and neither of the captors noted it.

"You played it low down on me," remarked Val Harper, whose face now lost its leering grin and took on a sinister expression, "but you'll never do it agin."

"We might have killed you, but we spared your life."

"Some things is as bad as shootin' and what you done was one of 'em. I never forgit anything of that sort, and Bill and me is pardners. Am I right, Bill?"

"Well, I ruther guess you be, but I'm gettin' tired of this, Val."

"What do you intend to do with us?" asked Arlos.

"Give you the 'witch's parole,'" was the reply.

Arlos knew the frightful meaning of this declaration. He and Ra-lo-no were to be told to run for their lives, and, as they ran, their captors would raise their rifles and shoot them down. Such things were done during the late war, and in some parts of the country it was known as the "witch's parole."

"Do you intend to murder us?" asked Arlos.

"We hain't said that, younker," was the answer;

"Bill and me don't murder nobody; that ain't the right word to use. You and that sarpent mebbe now kin run faster than a bullet. Anyhow you're going to have the chance to try it!"

Again Ra-lo-no slanted his head and partly rose to his feet. Thinking, in the excitement of the moment, that he was about to start on his hopeless dash for life, Arlos caught his arm and forced him back.

"Stay where you are!" he commanded, forgetting that his words were not intelligible, though his act must have been.

"No need of that," said Bill Goodwin; "you've both got to make the run and you might as well start now as to wait. The sooner the thing's begun the sooner it's over."

Arlos' face paled. Was there no help? Were he and his companion to be slain in cold blood? Was this to be the awful end of his jaunt for health and pleasure, thus to be shot like a wild beast in the woods?

He could not move any more than could the boulder upon which he was sitting.

The Shoshone was fidgeting in a curious manner. Could it be that he understood what was going on?

Suddenly the mental and bodily powers of Arlos Hayman came back to him.

"Val Harper and Bill Goodwin," said he in a low, measured voice, "neither I nor my friend will obey you; you can do nothing with us; we are your masters!"

For the youth had made a discovery, and had full warrant for his astounding declaration. Something moved among the trees a little to the left and just beyond Val Harper. That which Ra-lo-no had heard was the cautious stirring of a figure, though no one else caught the sound.

A young man, apparently about the age of Arlos, stepped silently from behind a tree and aimed his rifle at Val Harper. At the same moment, his companion, who seemed to be a hardy hunter, advanced with the same noiselessness into view and sighted his weapon at Goodwin.

It was this man whose voice rang out loud and clear.

"Up with your hands, both of you!"

A bolt from the clear sky could not have startled the miscreants more. The weapons of both seemed to drop from their nerveless hands, which retained only enough vitality to be extended tremblingly upward.

A horrible grimace came over the face of Val Harper, and he emitted a giggling sound meant for a laugh, but with anything but mirth in it.

"We was only foolin' with 'em," he managed to say.

"No; we didn't mean nuthin'," added Goodwin.

"All I've got to say to you chaps is—git!"

The hunter was as grim as fate, and neither he nor his youthful companion changed the aim of their weapons which covered both men.

"We'll do that, of course, bein' as you say it and I s'pose mean it; but you'll let us have our hosses and guns?"

"Git!" thundered Varnum Brown, with a flash of his small gray eyes and a threatening toying with his Winchester.

The two men who had the tables turned upon them so completely, stayed not on the order of their going, but went.

Ay, went with a vengeance. They broke into a rapid run, never looking behind them, but, believing it was the "witch's parole" that had been given them, strove with desperate haste, expecting every minute to hear the crack of the leveled rifles and to feel the fatal sting of the bullets.

Such, too, was the expectation of Arlos Hayman and Ra-lo-no, who held their breath and waited for the flash and report of the weapons.

But neither fired. The miscreants deserved no mercy, but it was shown them nevertheless, and

the watchers laughed at the panic of the wretches who ran as never before.

The Shoshone was disappointed at the consideration shown the men, who would have murdered him and his friend but for this timely interference.

With an exclamation in his own tongue, Ra-lo-no bounded forward, caught up his gun from where it was leaning against the bowlder, aimed at Val Harper, and fired.

The fugitive uttered a wild screech, leaped several feet in the air, but kept on running as before. The Shoshone had winged him, but inflicted only a painful hurt, having done which he lowered his gun and shook with laughter.

The men, continuing their flight, soon vanished from sight and were seen no more.

Then the happy Arlos Hayman turned and shook the hand of Dolph Bushkirk, whom he had searched for so long, and who finally appeared at a crisis in his fate. He was then introduced to Varnum Brown, the hunter and guide, who remarked :

“I don’t feel that we done quite right in letting them two scamps go, but we couldn’t shoot ’em in their tracks as they desarved. Howdy, younker?”

This was addressed to the grinning Ra-lo-no, who accepted the hand of the man and the youth in turn, though he could not talk intelligibly to them,

Arlos quickly made known what had taken place, and it need not be said that the meeting between him and Dolph was of the most happy nature.

While they were exchanging experiences, Budd Slogan came forward, and another pleasant interchange and explanation followed.

"I signaled to you," he said, addressing Arlos, "but you were so long comin' I set out to larn the reason fur the same."

"And you have just learned it; it was a blessed providence indeed."

"So it war, younker, so it war."

Budd now related how he came to meet the gold-hunters, and how only a short time before they came upon the stolen horses, tethered in a secluded spot. The others took possession of their own animals and, bidding their friend good-by, set out homeward, well satisfied with the ending of their luckless hunt for the precious metal which had brought them so far into the wilderness.

Harper and Goodwin had not only been compelled to leave their animals behind, but also their rifles. How they emerged from their misfortune the others never learned, for it was a matter of indifference to them.

Ra-lo-no stood quietly looking on, his broad face lit up by a pleasing smile, while his friends chat-

tered, and then, turning to Budd Slogan, the two talked together for several minutes.

"The youngker says he wishes you well," explained Budd, turning to the youths, "and that he must bid you good-by. He feels it, but he's an Injin, and tharfur won't show it."

The young Shoshone shook hands all around, with the same fixed smile on his dusky countenance. He left Arlos to the last, and, when their hands clasped, they remained thus. Turning about, they slowly walked a few paces, their palms still closed. Suddenly the young Indian stopped, and, pressing the hand of Arlos, said, with startling intensity :

"God bless, Arlos—God bless, Arlos!"

It fairly took away the breath of Arlos to hear himself addressed in this manner. Where Ra-lo-no had picked up these words it was impossible to guess, except that he had caught the name of his young friend from hearing others pronounce it. It looked as if the touching invocation had been gradually crystallizing in his brain until now it found expression.

Looking straight into the black eyes, Arlos saw a suspicious moisture which he had never expected to see. Warmly returning the pressure, he responded :

"God bless you, Ra-lo-no! God bless you, I say!"

The young Shoshone drew away his hand, looked

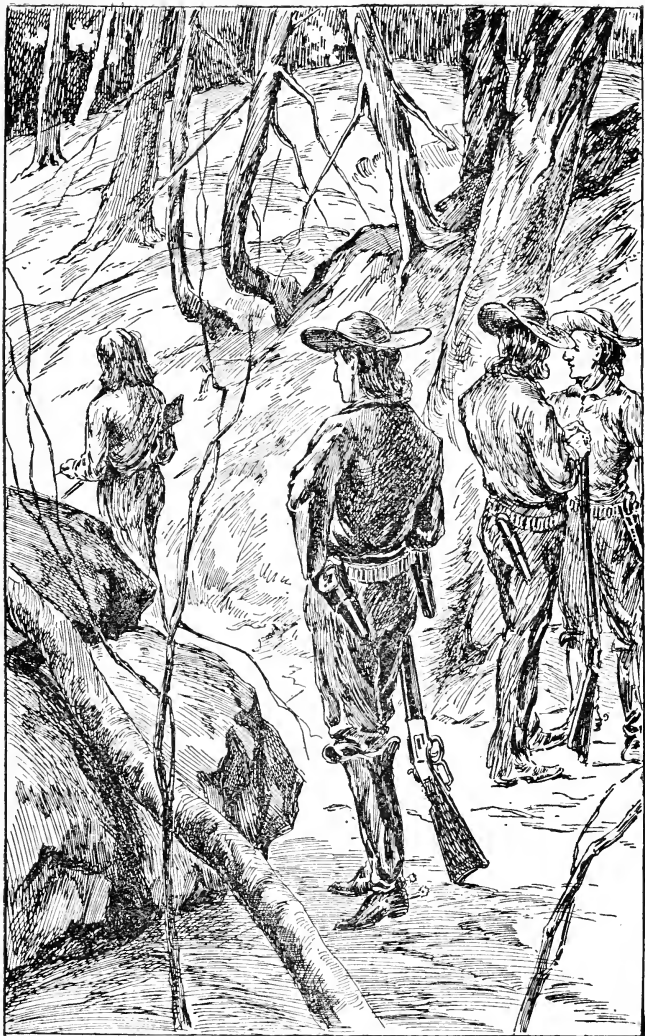
keenly at Arlos for several seconds, and seemed to be struggling to frame other words into utterance; but he must have felt it was useless, for, turning about, he walked rapidly away. Arlos stood motionless and watched him as he moved briskly off, expecting him to look back for a final salutation; but he did not. At last he passed from view, and Arlos Hayman never saw him again.

Turning about, the youth rejoined his friends, who were curiously watching the scene.

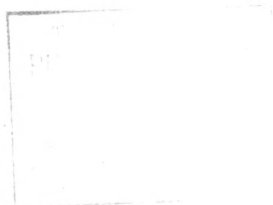
"He proved himself a true friend to me," said Arlos, in explanation, "and I am sorry to part with him; but, Dolph, I am delighted to meet you."

"No more delighted than I am to meet you," was the hearty response. "If I had thought there was any use of repeating my invitation to join me on this hunt I would have done so; but you cut me off so short the first time that I gave it up."

"Well, I made a dunce of myself and paid dearly for it. My health broke down, and the doctor said I must do something like this or die, so I concluded it would be a foolish thing to die while it was in my power to live. I started for Denver to ask you to join me on a hunt, but when I reached your house I learned that you had been gone for a week. Your father met me at the station and explained matters—for I had telegraphed him—and since then Budd



The young Shoshone walked rapidly away and Arlos never saw him again.



and I have spent most of the time in hunting for you."

"It is certain that you found one thing for which you were hunting."

"What is that?"

"Your rugged health and strength; I never saw you look better."

"I am glad to hear you say that, for then my business in this part of the world is done; I do feel like a new fellow, all over, except that I am a little homesick."

"I think I have had a touch of that myself," laughed Dolph, "and, therefore, I beg to lay a proposition before this honorable body," he added, looking from one to the other, "and the same is that we strike a bee line as nearly as possible for the Miner's Delight at Central City, with a view of keeping on to Denver and the metropolis of the United States.

Manifestly this was the only thing to do, and the four horsemen, in buoyant spirits, were soon making their way homeward. Their increased number, and the presence of two such veterans as Budd Slogan and Varnum Brown, removed all misgivings from the youths, who laughed and chatted over old times, and made enough engagements to keep them occupied for several years to come.

Belix Jenkins, of the Miner's Delight, gave the

party a rousing reception when the four dismounted in front of his hostelry. With a resounding slap upon the back of Arlos he said :

“ Younker, if any chap invites you to drink, and you don’t, and there’s a rumpus, don’t expect me to back you up, for I won’t.”

“ How is that, Belix ?”

“ ’Cause you don’t need it ; you can take care of yourself agin any man in Central City, or this side of the Rockies. Do you grasp the idea, younker ?”

No compliment could have been more pleasing to Arlos, who laughed so loud and long that the others had to join him.

The party divided at Central City, Varnum Brown and Budd Slogan remaining behind. Arlos paid his guide the full amount agreed upon, and added a handsome present beside. He tried to do the same with the genial giant, Belix Jenkins, but he would not permit it. When Arlos and Dolph entered the wabbling stage the next day and swung out of the frontier town, they carried with them the best wishes of the landlord, the guides, and all whom they had met in the place.

At Denver Arlos left the train with Dolph and spent several days with him in that city, whose growth and prosperity are among the wonders of the great West. Finally, he set out for home,

where his ruddy cheeks, bright eyes, and elastic frame made it almost seem to his overjoyed parents and sister as if he had risen from the grave. When Dr. Kleinman dropped in he surveyed the youthful athlete from head to foot and remarked :

“Humph ! I told you so.”

THE END.

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